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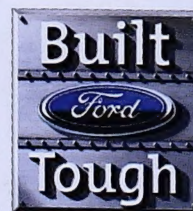
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JUNE 1999

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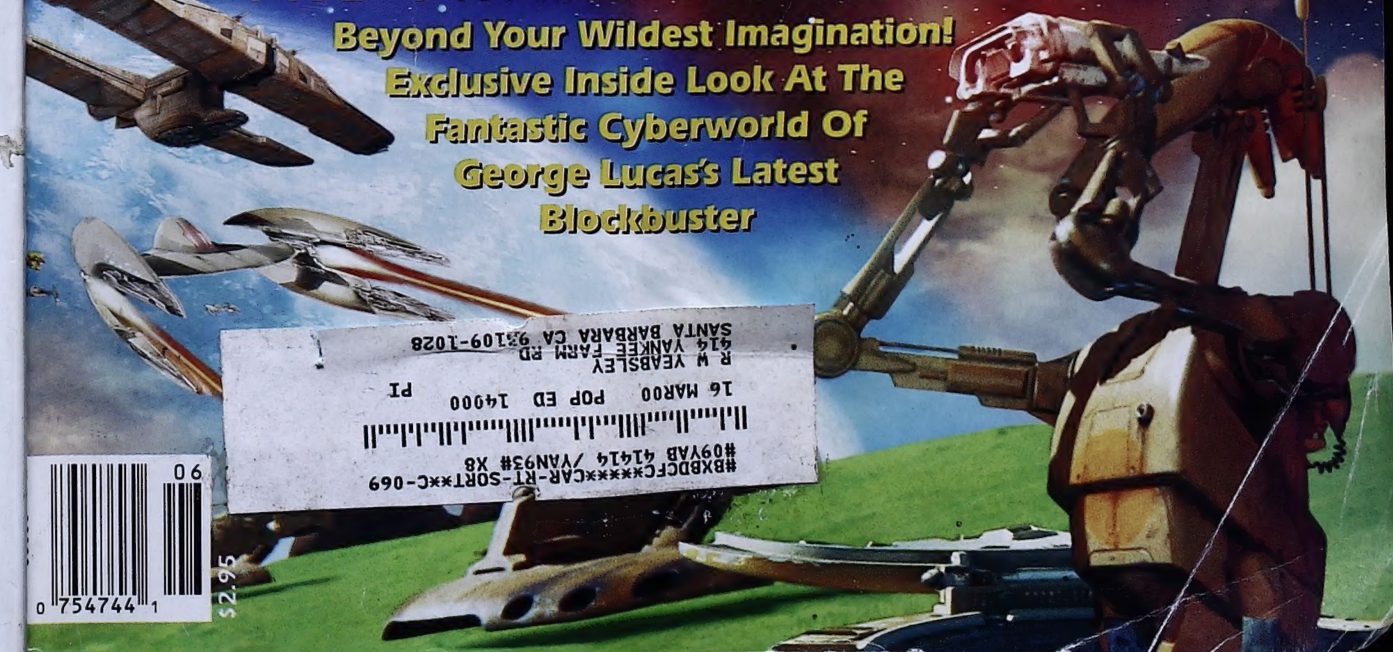
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THE MACHINES OF STAR WARS EPISODE I

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June

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40 New Cars

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Science

STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

The Machines Of Star Wars

George Lucas gives you an exclusive peek at the mind-boggling space- and landcraft that appear in "Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace." We're also giving away a great collector "Star Wars" poster, bound right into this June issue. Cutaway views reveal the inner workings of these fantastic creations. www.popularmechanics.com/popmech/hot/SWP.html

Outdoors

Ride The Wind

When Can-nondale bicycle makers wanted to forge the most perfect union of man and machine without bionic surgery, they turned to the wind tunnel. Here's how they got the aero advantage in racing. www.popularmechanics.com/popmech/sci/9808STSSP.html

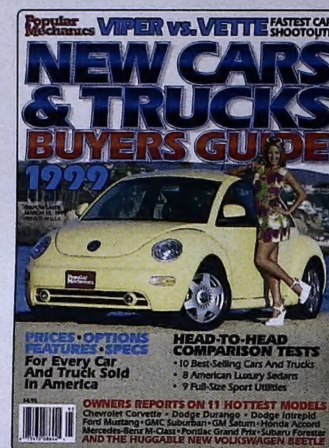
Technology

The PC You Wear

IBM whisks you into its secret labs for an inside look at the PCs of tomorrow. One of the most impressive developments is a lightweight, wearable PC that's being called the Walkman of personal computing. Here's the complete story. www.popularmechanics.com/popmech/elect/9812EFCOAP.html



Automotive



Our New Cars & Trucks Buyers Guide

Here's all you need to know about buying a new car or truck. The information includes features, specs, prices and comparison tests, as well as PM's exclusive owners reports. www.popularmechanics.com/popmech/auto3/99CBG/99CBGP.html

Home Improvement Riding Mowers

Why walk when you can ride? Our test of eight riding mowers, with prices ranging from \$860 to \$3700, shows you what you get for your money and which mower is right for you. www.popularmechanics.com/popmech/homei/9807HIGDCP.html



My Pentax IQZoom 160

This is the five-point passive autofocus system that measured how tall Omar was, chose the optimum setting, and captured every feather in perfect detail.

This is the easy-to-read dial that let me quickly pick the daylight-sync shooting mode so not a single shadow crossed Omar's kissable mug.



This is the power zoom lens that went from 38mm to 160mm in the blink of an ostrich's eye. It let me get to Omar's level without having to get in Omar's path.

This is the fail-safe loading technology that let me slip in a new roll of film while Toby was circling my legs and Omar was circling Toby.

My Photo

This is my bird's-eye view of Omar — "King of the Petting Zoo" as he was eyeing my son Toby for lunch.

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Editor's Notes

Star Wars And Star Students

It is quite possibly the most anticipated movie of all time. Film-maker George Lucas has spent more than \$100 million out of his own pocket to make



PHOTO BY JAMES A. SUGAR

Science editor Jim Wilson and his new pal, a "Star Wars" battle droid.

Everything else you see is virtual, existing only inside a computer. Lucas has a policy of never creating humans via computer. Other than that, technology rules. Lucas says that the technology used to make this film, compared to the technology used 22 years ago to make the original "Star Wars," is a technology leap akin to that from silent films to talkies. To find out just how far filmmaking technology has come in 22 years, we dispatched science editor Jim Wilson to Lucas's Skywalker Ranch magic kingdom, 60 miles north of San Francisco. You just can't walk into this place. There are no tours and everything on the third floor is top secret. But George Lucas happens to be a fan of POPULAR MECHANICS. So Wilson was treated royally and given almost total access to the secret world of Lucas-film. His exciting cover story begins on page 76. Read it. Enjoy it. Then go see the film. ... Those of you who read us on a regular basis know that we're a supporter of McPherson College in McPherson, Kan., through our relationship with PM's newest contributing editor, Jay Leno. Jay has been an admirer

"Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace." There is no question this latest "Star Wars" film will be another blockbuster. The only question is how big a blockbuster. Lucas and his company have created a whole world entirely inside computers to make this film. In fact, the only actual objects in the film are the humans.

and supporter of the four-year private school, which was founded in 1887, because of its unique auto restoration program. Because of its unusual curriculum, which both Jay Leno and we think is important to the youth of America, we've established the Jay Leno/POPULAR MECHANICS Scholarship at McPherson. Recently, I had the pleasure of visiting McPherson College and presenting a check for the first year's scholarship funding to McPherson president Gary Dill. I also met a fine young man, our first scholarship winner, Preston Switzer of Taylor, Neb. Early in his senior year at Loup County Public School in Taylor, Preston decided he'd like to pursue a career in auto restoration. He had no idea where he could go to get this type of education. He didn't want to be a mechanic or do bodywork on newer cars. He wanted to restore antiques, classics and special interest collector cars. A friend told Preston about McPherson and he and his parents went for a visit. The campus was beautiful but when



PHOTO BY DARRIN LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPHY

Gary Dill, president of McPherson College, center, and Preston Switzer, right.

they walked through the doors, that was it. They were sold. There was no doubt that this was where Preston wanted to further his education. If you or someone you know wants further information on McPherson, contact the school by writing the College Admissions Office, McPherson College, 1600 E. Euclid St., P.O. Box 1402, McPherson, KS 67460. You can also call 800-365-7402 or 316-241-0731, or visit the school's Web site: www.mcpherson.edu. Till next time.

Joe Oldham
Joe Oldham

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Creative Director Bryan Canniff
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The PMZone

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Editorial Administration

Administrative Asst. Josephine Caronia
Executive Assistant Barbara A. Novak

Reader Information Services

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Editorial Offices

224 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019
212/649-2000

Publisher Jay McGill

Associate Publisher/Marketing Director William E. Congdon

Associate Publisher/Advertising Director Gregg R. Hano
212/649-3135
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Marketing Services Manager Kim A. Boknoski
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212/649-3078

Marketing Coordinator Joan Ferguson
212/649-3040

Administrative Coordinator Karen O'Rourke
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Advertising Sales Offices

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Chicago

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972/529-9687

Direct Response

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212/649-3136
Matthew Friedman
212/649-3218

Classified

Manager Kevin Bristow
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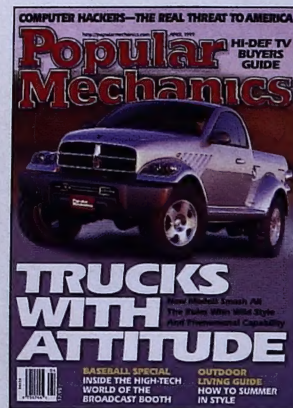
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Letters

Trucks With Attitude



The new Dodge Power Wagon concept truck is incredible! My biggest fear is that Dodge will do what every other manufacturer does with concept cars—tone down its radical styling so that it sits well with the general public. Please, no! Sell it to us the way it is, tomorrow!

JAY GREENER
VIA INTERNET

Under The Gun

As a law-abiding gun owner from Massachusetts, I would like to thank you for printing the letter titled "Gun Geek." It was refreshing to see such a no-nonsense reply to such a nonsense-filled letter.

ED LEFAVE
VIA INTERNET

I want to compliment you on the answer to the letter complaining about gun articles. Your answer hit the nail on the head and couldn't have been any clearer. I'm glad that your magazine has the guts to stand up to people like that. I am an NRA Life Member and a police officer of 28 years. I guess I'm from the old school and believe that every person is responsible for his or her own actions. Guns, like any other object, are dangerous if you don't use them responsibly.

CAPT. SID RIEFF
VIA INTERNET

I just had to drop a line and express my appreciation. Your response to the letter sent by Mr. Miller restored my hope that there are still thinking people on the planet. Your reply was direct

and to the point. It is beyond my comprehension how people can demonize an inanimate object.

MIKE COTTON
VIA INTERNET

Thanks for a direct and to-the-point response to Mr. Miller's letter on banning guns. It's good to see editors stand up for what they believe is right. As a local NRA rep, I try to get people to understand that it's not just one amendment that's important. It's the fact that if one goes, all our freedom is lost. That's something that can never be allowed to happen.

STEPHEN PARRIS
VIA INTERNET

Thank you! It is really great to see a publication stand up for the rights of all U.S. citizens. I think Mr. Miller surely

missed the point of your magazine. You report on all technical developments. Although I am a gun owner, I also see the issue as that of freedom of speech.

PAUL BAXTER
VIA INTERNET

I was greatly pleased with your response to Mr. Miller's letter. It was gratifying to see an editor strongly backing the Second Amendment.

JOHN BECHTOL
VIA INTERNET

I'm canceling my subscription to PM. Your answer to a simple, valid question concerning articles about guns was disgusting. With answers like that, the only people reading your magazine will be the militia and Ted Kaczynski.

GERARDO GARCIA
VIA INTERNET

Reader Project Of The Month

I have just completed a home workshop project I hope is worthy of coverage in your magazine. I have a large piece of rural property and was looking for a way to improve the efficiency of my mower. I have replaced the 18-hp air-cooled Briggs and Stratton engine in my riding mower with a 60-hp Chevrolet Sprint engine.



When I took measurements of the Sprint motor I found that they were very close to the Briggs and Stratton engine's and *voilà!*—the solution to a quieter, more powerful mower was at hand.

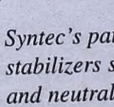
ED KIDERA
BRISTOL, WI

If your project is chosen as Reader Project Of The Month, you will receive a selection of Popular Mechanics/Wal-Mart tools as a token of our appreciation for sharing your project with us. For your project to be considered, please send a clear, color photo and brief description to: Reader Project Of The Month, Popular Mechanics, 224 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019.

HARMFUL PARTICLES CAN RUN, BUT THEY CAN'T HIDE.

Ironically, your engine's worst enemy is itself. With every stroke, an internal combustion engine spews

corrosive particles into your oil. Particles that, over time, can cause severe wear.



harmful particles. Whether they're oxidized fuel fragments, soot, or any other by-products of combustion,

Syntec's stabilizers engulf them, suspending them safely away from engine parts.

Of course, Castrol Syntec protects your engine in other ways, too. Most

But Castrol Syntec, our most advanced motor oil to date, is specially engineered to hunt down harmful particles and neutralize them before they can start neutralizing your engine.

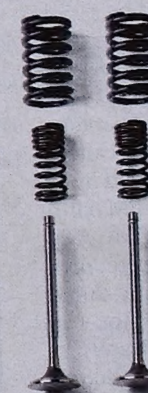
The key is that Syntec is never idle. Its patented stabilizers constantly



patrol your engine looking for all types of

notably, by bonding to engine parts, leaving a layer of protection far stronger than conventional oil.

So you see, there may still be armies of particles in your engine, but with Castrol Syntec



*Artist's rendering of magnified engine particle.

hunting them down, they don't stand a chance.

Castrol Syntec can be used in all cars, new and old, including vehicles in which conventional oil was previously used.



THE ACTIVE LUBRICANT.

Letters are subject to editing for length, style and format.

Time Machine

90
Years Ago:
June 1909

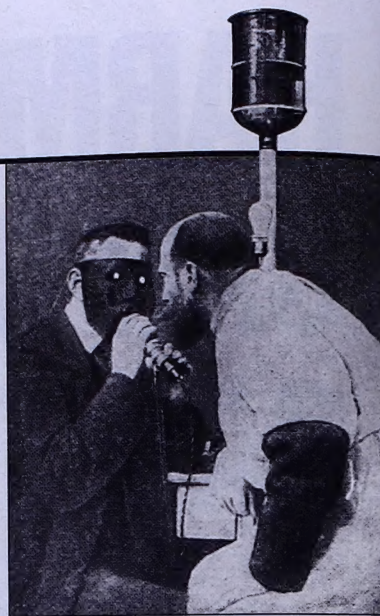


See Shells

Battleships using searchlights to pick up approaching torpedo boats at night were toying with suicide since they plainly marked themselves as targets. The Germans were experimenting with acetylene shells that were fired as far as 6 miles with a special gun. When the shell hit the sea, water combined with the shell's carbide to form acetylene gas, which ignited and burned with a light of 3000 candlepower. This illuminated enemy targets without compromising the battleship.

The Eyes Have It

No, this isn't a man eating electric light fixtures. It's a patient having the back of his eyes examined. The device, known as the ophthalmodiaphanoscope, consisted of an 80-candlepower lamp with a self-contained tube that provided water cooling. The patient placed the bulb as far back in his mouth as possible and against the upper wall of the buccal cavity. The doctor viewed the pupil of the eye from the front, where the highly illu-



minated retina was plainly visible, allowing him to diagnose possible problems.

60
Years Ago:
June 1939



'Choo Fly

Pride of the American railroads, the world's largest steam locomotive, designed by Raymond Loewy, was put on display at the New York World's Fair. Weighing more than 1 million pounds, the engine developed 6500 hp at 100 mph. Destined to pull one of the crack passenger trains of the Pennsylvania Railroad after its stint in the fair, the engine was expected to smash the 127-mph record set by a Pennsylvania engine pulling the Broadway Limited in 1905.

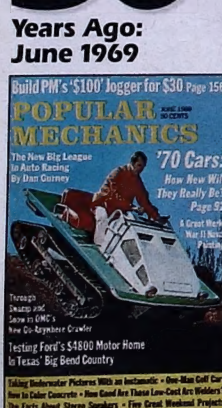
Pearls Before Pearl

With the horror of Pearl Harbor still 30 months into the future, the New York World's Fair whirled away in oblivious innocence. One exhibitor to the fair was an unnamed Japanese company that brought over, interestingly



enough, a model of the historically famous Liberty Bell that reportedly cost \$1 million to build. Standing 1 ft. 2 in. high, and measuring 1 ft. 3 in. in diameter, the model contained 11,600 pearls, 366 diamonds and more than 26 pounds of silver.

30
Years Ago:
June 1969

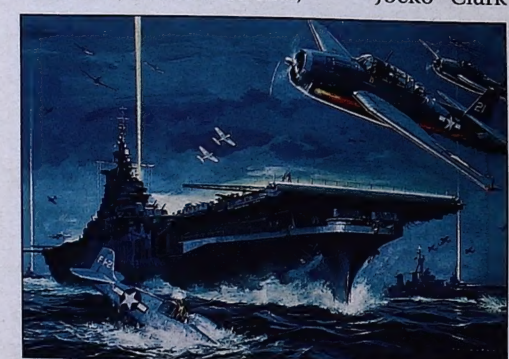


Try And Stop Me

Swamps and snow were no obstacles to OMC's planned new ATV. Powered by a 25-hp OMC engine and a pair of hydrostatic transmissions controlling the tanklike rubber treads, the Secret Green Machine, as it was called, couldn't be stopped no matter what the PM editor threw at it. The OMC ATV could climb up a steeply inclined loose sand dune and over tree stumps—and even travel over water. The machine's projected price was a steep (for the time) \$2300.

Illuminating History

It was one of World War II's supreme moments. U.S. warplanes had hit the Imperial Fleet and, now low on fuel,



were returning to their carriers and trying to find them in pitch darkness. PM captured the full drama of the historic moment when Rear Adm. J.J. "Jocko" Clark made a remarkable decision in the face of possible enemy subs in the area and gambled the fate of his entire task group to help the pilots: Damn the submarines! Turn on the lights!

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ORGANIZE YOUR

COLLECTIBLES

TURN YOUR COLLECTION INTO SOMETHING SPECIAL

What's the difference between collecting and just gathering a bunch of stuff? A collector who's passionate about his hobby can walk into a room and appreciate the value and depth of a collection, while to the untrained eye it may just look like a bunch of stuff, a mess. Whether it's memorabilia from your favorite movie or antique timepieces, a **Brother P-Touch Electronic Labeling System** can turn your collection into something others will admire as much as you do.

For example, a lot of people say they have a baseball card collection, but what they really have is a pile of cards. Even if they were to take those cards and arrange them into a neat display case with the extra cards carefully cataloged and stored close by, it still wouldn't really be a collection.

Why not? If someone else walked into the room, would that person know that the left side of the display box held all the batting champions for the last decade and the right side all the Cy Young Award winners? Would they know that the cards were separated into American League and National League by year? Probably not, unless the display box was labeled as such.



When you go to an auto museum or a gun show, the items aren't just scattered about the room. They're arranged, organized, and clearly marked. That's what makes them a collection. A P-Touch System is the easiest way to complete your collection. Labeling has another benefit, too. It helps you decide what qualifies as collectible, because if it's not worth identifying, it's probably not worth keeping.

IT'S EASY TO USE

With a P-Touch Electronic Labeler, organizing your collection is a snap; just pop in a tape cassette, type in your data, and out comes a printed, durable label that's virtually waterproof,

smudge-proof and fade-proof. Peel off the backing and stick it in place — it'll stay put

1957 DIESEL ENGINE

without crinkling or curling. P-Touch labels can be whatever length you like and anywhere from 1/4 inch to 1-1/2 inches wide, depending on the model used. Tapes come in a wide variety of colors and can be printed in different type styles, so the labels complement the items on display.

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Corrosion-resistant three-rivet construction gives every MaxSteel™ tape rule extra durability.



Stanley measuring tools feature an exclusive cushion grip, heavy-duty Mylar® coating and impact-resistant casing. Lengths run from 3 ft. to 200 ft.

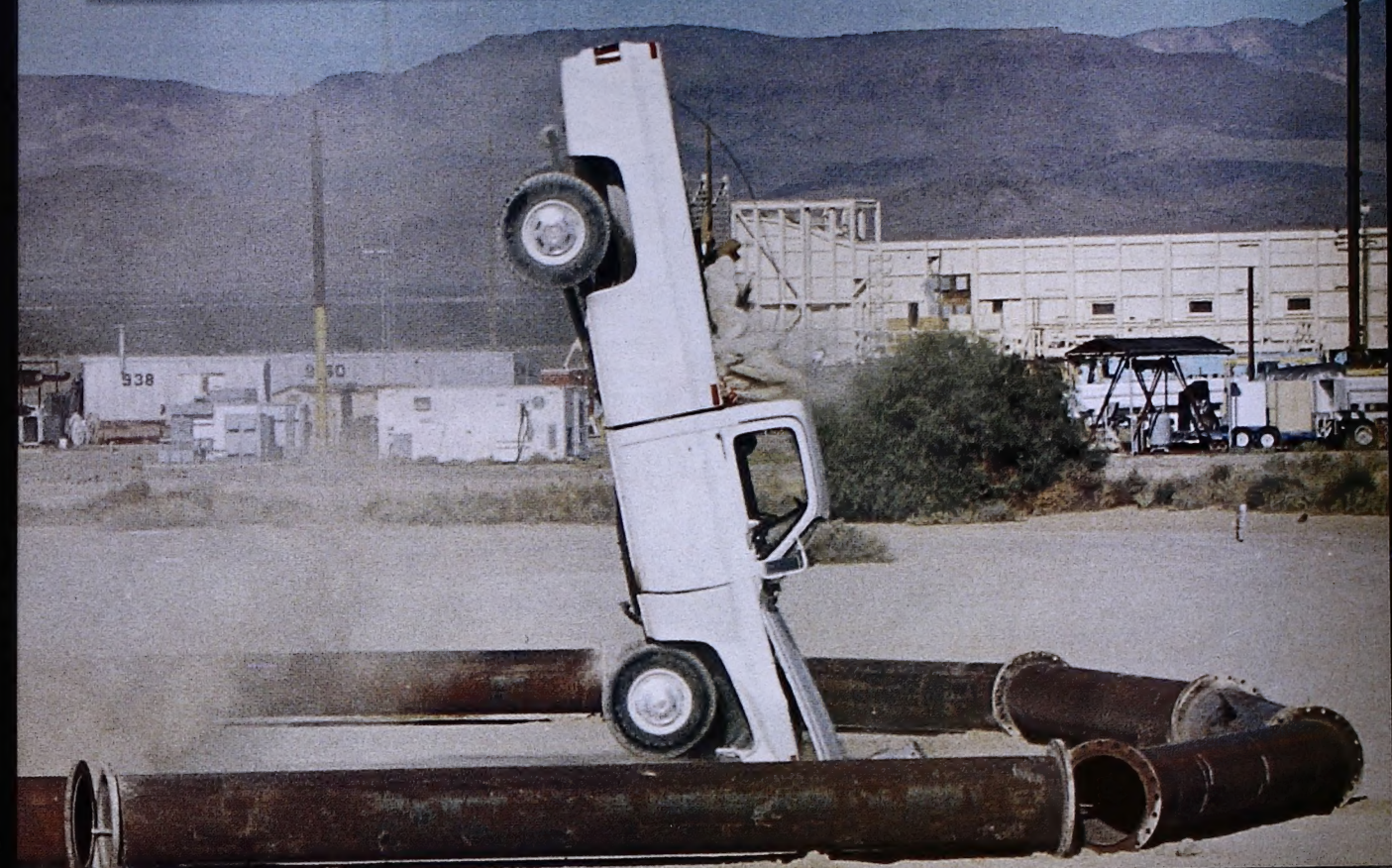
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Technology Watch

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Terrorist Tripper

A new way of arranging old construction materials may protect U.S. embassies in hostile Third World countries.

Researchers from the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) have successfully tested a low-cost "terrorist vehicle barrier" at the Department of Energy's testing grounds in Nevada. The prototype consisted of 10 20-ft. sections of 22-in.-

dia. steel pipe, each weighing 1300 pounds. Arranged in a U-shape pattern, the pipes were laced with a 1-in. wire-wrapped cable that was anchored to a pair

of 1200-pound blocks. Low-tech materials were selected because they are readily available around the world and can be assembled without heavy construction equipment.

For their mock attack, researchers loaded a ¾-ton pickup truck with 400

pounds of sand to simulate an explosive package. The remote-control truck was then driven into the barrier at 36 mph.

The collision, shown above, stopped the truck—shearing its engine from its mounts, severing the transmission and crushing the driveshaft in the process. While the pipes moved about 18 ft. from their original location, they remained attached and anchored, and could be quickly rolled back into a protective position.

Before deploying a working system, researchers plan to test smaller-diameter pipes and heavier trucks.



June Highlights

Colorful Heartbeats—Fear of infection may add color to your next checkup.

■ **Big Brother In Your Pocket**—New driver's license has a chip only the police can read.

■ **GPS Bridge Watcher**—Unique monitoring system watches a bridge over troubled waters.

Editor: Jim Wilson
Reporters: Louis Brill, Stefano Coledan, Steve Ditlea, Mike Fillon, Kathleen Gleaves, Scott Gourley.

Technology Watch

Safer, Warmer Stethoscopes

Fear of spreading infections has launched a colorful new medical product, the Ygeia.

Resembling poker chips, the thin latex membranes slip on the end of stethoscopes. This prevents bacteria and viruses that lurk on the skin from being transmitted among patients when doctors listen to their hearts and lungs. After each exam, a doctor drops the used Ygeia in disinfectant. A half-hour later, it's ready for reuse.



The current practice of wiping stethoscopes with disinfectant provides insufficient contact time to clean the instruments, says Ygeia's manufacturer, SDPI of Echirolles, France.

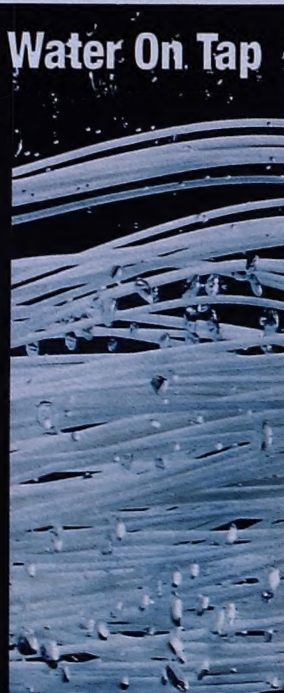
Ygeias make exams more pleasant for kids and less trying for their doctors, too. SDPI says covered stethoscopes don't feel as cold on bare skin, so kids are less likely to squirm and cry. When kids are quiet, it's easier for doctors to hear young hearts.

Bottle-Quality Water On Tap

If you want a glass of really clean water, find a sink in Auvers-sur-Oise, France. The town's water is purified by one of the first commercial-scale nanofiltration systems.

Before being pumped into distribution mains, water circulates around bundles of narrow tubes. The liquid passes through their semipermeable surface, while bacteria and pollutants stay behind, says manufacturer Vivendi of Paris.

The company hopes to sell its nanofiltration units to American towns that want to abandon more expensive chemical-based disinfection.



Clean water flows to the center of tens of thousands of narrow tubes (above) that are placed inside racks (left).



Light Approach To Fill-Ups

Environmentalists around the world have their eyes on a new gas station at Germany's Munich Airport. It is the first public filling station where motorists can buy liquefied or gaseous hydrogen.

When hydrogen combines with oxygen from the atmosphere, it produces a considerable amount of heat, plus ordi-

nary water. And water is the ideal feedstock for making more of the fuel. For this reason, hydrogen is considered the world's most environmentally friendly fuel.

The filling station sells two grades: -423°F liquefied hydrogen for specially equipped BMW cars and gaseous hydrogen for airport buses.

Dusting Off A Stellar Mystery

When NASA's Stardust probe and Comet Wild-2 meet in 2004, a high-tech dustpan will collect clues that may help answer one of biology's most important questions. Could cometary material have brought life to Earth?

The space dust will be captured in aerogel, a porous, silicon-based material that resembles light blue smoke and feels lighter than a feather. As cometary dust hits the aerogel at 14,000 mph the impact will create carrot-shaped microtunnels. These will trap and protect particles for the trip home. Ground tests suggest that

while the particles will heat up they will still retain their structure and composition, says Martha Hanner, an astronomer at the Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena, Calif.

En route to Wild-2, the probe will make two attempts to collect interstellar dust. The first takes place in 2000, the second in 2002. Then, in 2004, the spacecraft will come within 100 miles of the icy nucleus of Comet Wild-2 for the main event.

Launched from Cape Canaveral in February, Stardust and its dusty cargo will arrive back on Earth on Jan. 15, 2006.

Listening For A Winning Beat

It takes more than strength to swim your way to Olympic gold. You also need an optimal stroke rate. "How to teach a stroke rate is one of the most challenging issues in coaching," says John Leonard, executive director of the American Swimming Coaches Association. A new underwater signaling device may help.

The Aquapacer from Challenge & Response of Scotland (419-526-1010) merges a timer with an underwater beeper. The coach programs the stroke rate into the pacer unit (far right). The swimmer hears this pattern as beeps emitted from a sounder (right), worn in his swim cap. The company says that several Olympic hopefuls are training with its device.

The Aquapacer can be programmed for 16 stroke patterns or 16 different swimmers.



(More Technology Watch on page 22)

Keep it Basic

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15 mg "tar," 1.0 mg nicotine av. per cigarette by FTC method.

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Smoking By Pregnant Women May Result in Fetal Injury, Premature Birth, And Low Birth Weight.

Technology Watch

Batteries Zap Bike Police

Bicycle patrols cut crime by getting police out of their cars and onto the streets. The tradeoff is that foot patrols can't respond as rapidly to more distant emergencies. Trading shoe leather for bicycles has increased response time, but it lags toward the end of an officer's shift.

One solution is a battery-powered motor. It doesn't turn a mountain bike into a motorcycle, but it can give police an added boost for climbing hills. Police in Durham, England, who have tested the bike say they can cover twice the distance on routine patrols and arrive at emergency sites in better shape to respond.



Taking the heat out of the beat.

Your History In Your Pocket

The state of New Jersey is planning an ambitious program to place information about a person's contact with law enforcement and government agencies on a computer chip built into his driver's license.

In addition to storing a digital image of the driver, it would summarize the person's history of run-ins with law enforcement, including arrests, convictions and traffic violations. It would also list scheduled court appearances.

The state official who designed the license told PM the software allows it to be linked to bank accounts. This would enable the holder to automatically pay for bus tickets or road tolls.



Hackers beware: Attempting to read your chip (above left) could land you in prison.

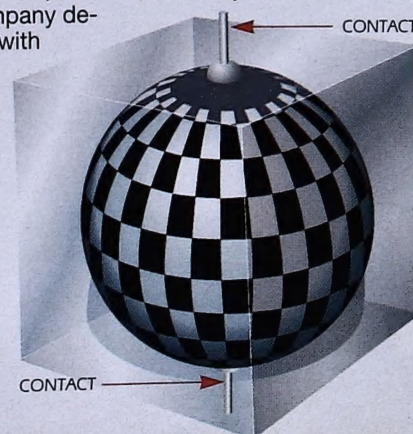
Spheres Make Cheap Chips

A new low-cost technology could replace flat microchips with spherical crystals.

Ball Semiconductor (www.ballsemi.com) says it has fabricated a transistor on a 1mm silicon sphere. To accurately etch circuit elements in 3D, the Allen, Texas, company developed a mirror with 45 facets to transfer a circuit pattern while compensating for spherical distortion on the silicon surface.

The chief source of sav-

The sphere could mean the end of flat silicon chips.



Stylish Pocket Shooter

Nikon wants to put some stylish steel in your pocket. Its Nuvis S camera packages a sophisticated 35mm camera in a fast-opening stainless steel case.

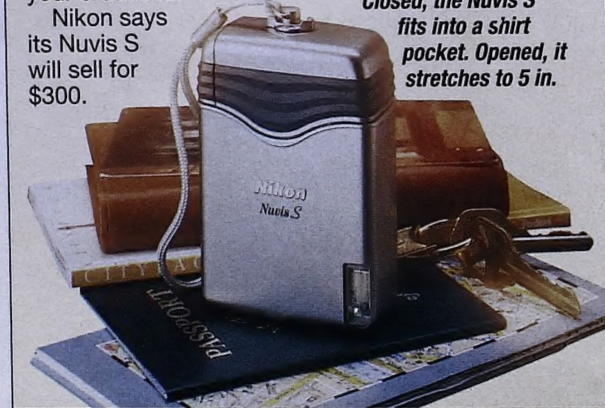
The heart of the Nuvis S is a Nikon 22.5mm-to-66mm zoom lens with precise 432-step autofocus. A range-correction system incorporated into the lens allows 18-in. closeups.

Other features include red-eye reduction and an autofocus illuminator that engages in low-light situations for sharper focused nighttime pictures.

There are four flash controls. A "slow sync" setting augments available light with a flash. Using the optional infrared remote control you can step into your creations.

Nikon says its Nuvis S will sell for \$300.

Closed, the Nuvis S fits into a shirt pocket. Opened, it stretches to 5 in.



Longer-Wearing Lenses

A new material may let you wear contact lenses longer, with less risk of eye infection.

Called a sulfoxide hydrogel polymer, the material increases the water and oxygen levels in the eye without increasing the concentrations of proteins that can lead to infections and blurred vision.

In conventional lenses, additives that increase the water level of the lens tend to also increase the deposition of proteins.

"The excess water in the lens makes it softer and more comfortable, besides providing much required oxygen to the eye," says Ravi Mukkamala, of Rohm and Haas Texas, in Houston. He and Carolyn Betozzi of the University of California in Berkeley co-invented the material.

Clinical trials will, among other things, help to determine how long the sulfoxide hydrogel lenses can be worn. They could be available as early next year.

(More Technology Watch on page 24)



If the idea of installing insulation makes you think of these, you haven't heard of ComfortTherm.

Installing insulation will never conjure up images of agony, misery or torture again, as long as you use ComfortTherm™ encapsulated insulation. ComfortTherm™ is wrapped in plastic, creating a barrier between you and the fiber glass. Which means there's less dust. And less dust means less itching. But ComfortTherm™ doesn't just make your remodeling project painless, it's also superior to



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Technology Watch

Bridge Over Troubled Waters

Strong currents, high winds and the constant threat of earthquakes make Japan's Akashi Strait one of the less inviting locations for building a bridge, let alone the world's longest suspension bridge.

Those same conditions also make it imperative that engineers who are responsible for bridge safety have the most accurate information possible about the subtle strains imposed by traffic and nature.

To precisely determine how the Akashi Bridge behaves, the Japanese government has installed a sophisti-

The GPS receivers make 10 measurements per second.

cated, 12-channel GPS measurement system. Developed by Leica Geosystems of Torrance, Calif., (310-791-5300) it consists of two GPS units mounted atop the bridge's twin towers and a third placed midspan. Working together, they can alert engineers to bridge movements as little as 1mm in any direction.

Computer Combats Disaster

Computer scientists have combined two computer programs developed for nuclear weapons work to make buildings safer. One program simulated blast physics, the other structural response. The new program, which runs on a supercomputer, can determine what happens to buildings in extreme conditions, such as explosions or violent weather.

"We want to use computers to test how a roof would fly off a building in a hurricane, understand why levees break, model how floors collapse in a gas explosion," says Rudy Matalucci, a civil engineer who leads the Architectural Surety program at Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, N.M. "We ought to be able to tell you whether you'd survive a blast 10 floors below you in a hotel." Designers may one day use similar programs to quickly test layouts, construction materials and disaster-mitigation technologies before actually constructing a building.

Future Fighter Refined

Boeing has refined the design of its Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) multipurpose aircraft.

The latest round of improvements include a reshaped empennage with horizontal tails for additional control power and a stealthier, aft-swept chin inlet. The company says the changes will make the jet less expensive to manufacture and maintain.

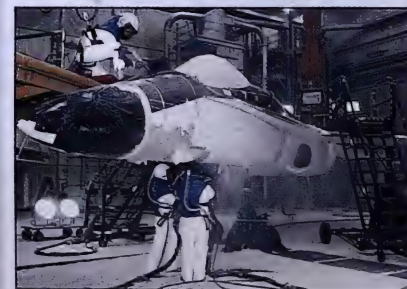
Boeing hopes to build a conventional takeoff and landing version of the JSF for the Air Force. Plans also call for a carrier-landing version for the U.S. Navy and a short takeoff/vertical landing model for the British Royal Navy and the U.S. Marine Corps. Performance characteristics will be tested from two X-planes that are currently under construction: the X-32A for the conventional takeoff and landing craft and the X-32B for the short takeoff/vertical landing variant.

"We've taken a very good design and made it better," says Dennis Mullenburg, director of JSF fighter systems.

Searching For Oil With Air Guns

Until recently, Puget Sound has kept its seismic secrets well hidden beneath deep water and a thick layer of glacial silt. This may change as researchers from several area universities finish studying data from tests in which the seabed was blasted with giant sonic guns. To paint a seismic picture of the Puget Lowland region, scientists and students aboard the University of Washington research vessel *Thomas Thompson* fired a 6200-cu.-in. air gun into the water every 30 seconds. Information on sound-wave arrival times was used to create a 3D image of the subsurface region. Similar methods have helped locate oil in the North Sea.

Wheat Starch Strips Jet Paint



Technicians at Northrop Grumman's stealth bomber plant in Palmdale, Calif., have found a faster way to strip the paint off F/A-18 Hornet strike fighters. Instead of hand sanding, they spray the planes with a pressurized blast of wheat starch.

The new technique takes less than half as long as hand sanding, which typically consumes four weeks.



New glass would prevent injuries by crumbling into sandlike fragments.

(More Technology Watch on page 26)

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Technology Watch

Salmon At Risk

● Nine species of salmon from the waters around heavily populated areas of Oregon and Washington have been placed on the federal endangered species list.

Fisheries experts say that the salmon are threatened with extinction because runaway development has altered their natural habitat.

Restoring the salmon is expected to require a decades-long effort that would include broad restrictions on logging and housing developments.

PCBs Turn Toxic

● A study of bottlenose dolphins that died after being stranded in Texas's Matagorda Bay has revealed toxic levels of PCBs in their tissues.

"People accumulate

these compounds in their body fat just like dolphins," says Texas A&M University toxicologist David Busbee.

The finding raises questions as to whether people living near the bay or eating seafood are accumulating high levels of PCBs.

Cut The Fertilizer

● American farmers can eliminate the 7000-square-mile "dead zone" in the northern Gulf of Mexico if they can keep more of the fertilizer they put on their land from washing into the Mississippi River, says Otto Doring. The Purdue University agricultural economist studied the link between farming and the Gulf.

The area is created because of excess nitrogen

emptying into the Gulf each summer. It accelerates the growth of algae, eventually leading to oxygen depletion that forces fish to swim away.

Reducing excess nitrogen in runoff from farmlands by 20 percent could restore sufficient oxygen and bring marine life back to the region.

How's The Water?

● Europeans plan to take the Pacific Ocean's temperature, from space.

Final testing is being completed on the Advanced Along Track Scanning Radiometer (AATSR). Next year it is scheduled to be launched on Envisat, the European Space Agency's environmental monitoring satellite.

Traveling on a near-polar orbit, AATSR's primary objective will be to obtain precise measurements of global sea surface temperature. Of particular interest will be the large-scale shifts in Pacific Ocean temperatures associated with the periodic El Niño events.

During the 1997-98 El Niño, higher water temperatures may have led to droughts and forest fires in Indonesia and violent storms along the west coast of the Americas.

PLANET WATCH

Antenna Clears, Cools

The antenna on your next car could do more than let you listen to the radio. It might also help you see better in winter and stay cooler in summer.

Eric K. Walton and his engineering students at Ohio State University are developing a multipurpose automobile antenna from off-the-shelf auto parts. One of their designs converts the metal film automakers now use as a sunscreen into an antenna. The other prototype captures radio signals with the wires now used in rear window defrosters. The next step is to merge the two designs. "If we put both together, we could produce a windshield that can help cool a car in summer, defrost it in winter and receive AM/FM signals," he says.

You won't see a thing if Walton's team succeeds—the antenna will be transparent.



An isolation transformer allows power and radio signals to coexist.

DON MANNES

Jack Puts A New Spin On Heavy Lifting

When you need to lift a heavy load, it's hard to beat a crane. Unless you are working in cramped quarters or on a job site covered with overhead wires. Here, the typical solution is to use pneumatic or hydraulic jacks, which often open up a whole new range of fluid leakage and power supply problems.

Pete Matuszak of New Berlin, Wis., came up with a novel solution by putting a powerful new spin on an old idea, the screw jack.

A 12-hp engine turns what is essentially a heavy-duty version of the screw jacks used to level sagging floors. Matuszak's company, Airjack (pmatus@execpc.com), demonstrated the Lift by raising an 80-ton excavator and 100-ton rock crusher. For an encore they plan to lift a locomotive.



The Lift is operated by a wire or wireless remote control. Individual Lifts can "talk" to each other to keep equipment level while it is being raised.

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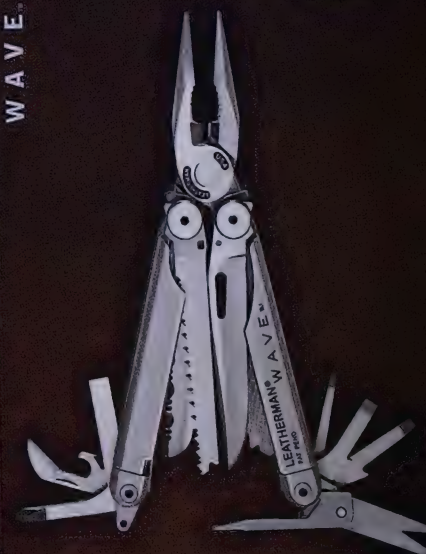
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Technology Watch



Weathermen Get Into Their Jobs

Television industry executives say that the principal reason viewers watch their local stations is to see the next day's weather forecast.

For owners of TV stations in markets that are served by several local stations this can be a big problem because there are only so many ways to present weather data. For this reason, weathermen are always looking for ways to make their maps and reports seem more exciting.

Walk Through Weather, new video presentation software from Weather Central of Madison, Wis., promises to sharpen a station's

competitive edge by putting local forecasters in the middle of their weather reports.

Instead of seeing the local weatherman standing in front of a regional map dotted with meteorological icons, the software projects a moving image of the forecaster in the middle of 3D representations of the fair or foul weather being forecast.

This human touch is added to an otherwise dry—or wet or windy—forecast by advanced computer graphic imaging systems running SGI's new software.

Walk Through Weather won't improve the accuracy of forecasts, but it will make them more entertaining, even if it is about to rain on your parade.

Mock Balloons Light The Night

Balloon lights have been a popular way of brightening outdoor events. But it isn't always possible—or economical—to use helium to keep them aloft.

Airstar America of Los Angeles (800-217-9001) has created a nonhelium version of its popular lights. Called Crystals, these mock balloons sit atop thin poles that adjust from 8 ft. to 16 ft.

Illumination comes from a 500- to 2000-watt lamp protected by a wire cage and placed inside the fan-filled balloon.

Capable of lighting 22,000 sq. ft., Crystals can keep an outdoor party going from dusk to dawn.



Mock balloons give off soft, glare-free light and can be decorated or painted with logos.

Robots Sell Real Estate

Intelligent Kiosk of Edina, Minn., says it has spent \$11 million to develop a new type of robot. Looking more like a teller machine than R2-D2, it is aimed at replacing real estate salesmen, insurance agents and other people who work as information middlemen between customers and large corporations.



Intelligent kiosks can anticipate a customer's questions.

Submersible Radio

Situations that demand tactical radios don't always occur on sunny days. Racal Communications of Rockville, Md., says that its 24.5-ounce submersible Miniature Secure Hand-held Radio (MSHR) is the smallest, lightest secure communicator in the world. Originally developed for special forces units, the 5-watt radio has settings for voice and data encryption.

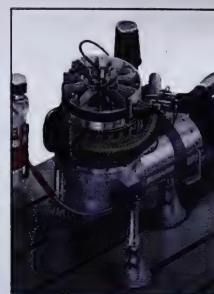


MSHR stays dry to depths of about 60 ft.

Novel Engine For Hybrid Vehicles

A novel rotating block engine may have a future as a power supply for hybrid gasoline/electric vehicles.

Instead of spinning a crankshaft, the Crossover Rod Engine developed by Charles Candler of Powell, Tenn., causes the entire block to rotate. Engineers who evaluated the design for the Department of Energy (DOE) say the engine could be easily configured as a generator for use in hybrid vehicles.



DOE reviewed a 2.5-liter prototype engine.

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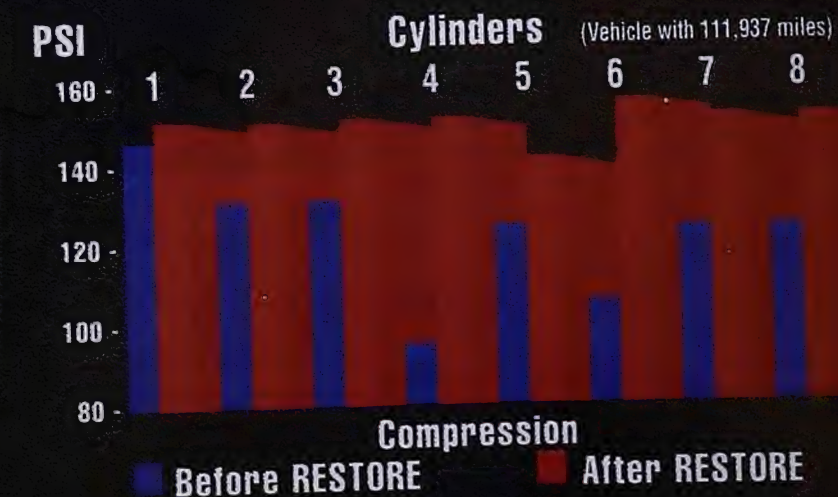
In normal driving, friction and wear cut scratches in the metal surfaces inside every car's engine. This causes compression and power loss and increases oil consumption as cars get older.

RESTORE with CSL fills these scratches and improves the seal between piston rings and cylinder walls.

This means better and more balanced compression across all cylinders which in turn restores engine power and reduces excess oil consumption in older engines. Independent tests prove that RESTORE with CSL really works to increase cylinder compression as shown by the graph below.

If you have a car or truck with a lot of miles, improve the engine performance with RESTORE. It's the only product that contains the exclusive CSL formula which fills and seals cylinder wear in addition to providing superior anti-wear lubrication. RESTORE really works! Satisfaction guaranteed.

RESTORE is available at all automotive retailers and major discount stores.



Technology Watch

CarterCopter Takes Off

The CarterCopter, a transcontinental gyrocopter, has taken off on its initial test flight program. Like helicopters, gyrocopters obtain lift from a rotor instead of a fixed wing. But, unlike helicopters, a gyrocopter's rotor is freewheeling. Thrust comes from a conventionally mounted engine.

Normally, this means gyrocopters require a takeoff roll. The CarterCopter differs in that its rotor is spun up prior to takeoff, providing just enough lift for a zero-roll takeoff (see "Coast to Coast on 125 Gal.," June 1996, page 48).

Having concluded a series of level flights

and S-turns, test pilots will now begin evaluating the craft's performance using various combinations of cyclic, collective and horizontal stabilator angles. Later, they will attempt the critical zero-roll takeoffs.

"Testing will continue until we fully understand how the aircraft is flying, in other words [until] our analysis agrees with flight data," says Jay Carter, president of the

Wichita Falls, Texas, company. "We expect some setbacks during testing. But we haven't uncovered anything that dampens our enthusiasm." Watch a video of the latest tests of the CarterCopter on the PMZone.

The CarterCopter's rotor is spun up before takeoff, to provide power for a nearly vertical liftoff.

Telegraphing A Solar Punch

Solar physicists believe it may now be possible to accurately predict intense magnetic bursts, known as coronal mass ejections, several days in advance.

They report a strong correlation between an S-shaped pattern on the sun, and the likelihood that an ejection will occur from that region within days. Magnetically disturbed regions that display a symmetrical, or butterfly-like, shape rarely erupt, say researchers.

"The S-shaped regions are the dangerous ones," says Richard Canfield of Montana State University.

The finding is good news for the electric utility industry. As powerful as billions of nuclear explosions, solar bursts have a reputation for destroying unprotected equipment.



Columbus Puts Fun Into Science



A bold new community development project aims to make Columbus, Ohio, the first city people think of when the topic turns to science or technology.

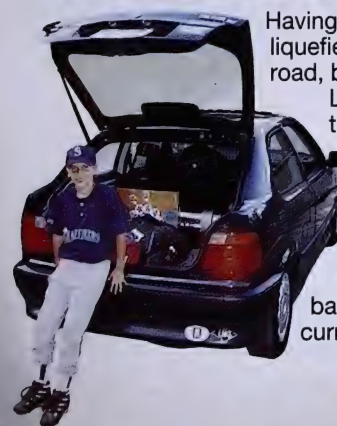
"We are building a great science center as the focal point for our downtown," says Dimon R. McFerson, chairman of the board of trustees of COSI, formerly the Center of Science and Industry. "That says everything about our sense of where the future lies."

The centerpiece of this effort will be a new \$125 million, 320,000-sq.-ft. science education building, designed by world renowned architect Arata Isozaki.

The new structure will be divided into "learning worlds" that explore topics in depth. Ocean Learning World will feature a simulated shipwreck. Adventure World takes visitors to an archeological dig. Other worlds will explore computers, space and medicine. The center opens in November.

COSI will anchor a \$2 billion urban renewal zone on Ohio's Scioto River.

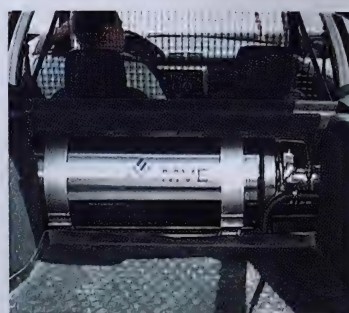
At -260°F It Is The World's Coolest Car



Having proved its safety in more than 2000 trucks and buses, liquefied natural gas (LNG) is ready to take its show on the road, by powering a BMW.

LNG is, mostly, methane gas that has been cooled to the point where it becomes a liquid. As the car drives, a heat exchanger vaporizes small amounts of the -260°F liquid. Since methane has the highest hydrogen-to-carbon ratio of any fossil fuel, it burns clean. The key to making it a practical automotive fuel is building cylinders that can keep the LNG cold.

MVE-INC, a manufacturer of cryogenic equipment based in Burnsville, Minn., designed the system that is currently being tested by the German automaker.



The production version of the insulated tank will weigh about as much as a regular gasoline or diesel fuel tank.



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Technology

Planning A Remodel? Go Digital

BY KIM KOMANDO

► Let's say it's 20 years

ago and you want to remodel/redecorate/landscape your home—or maybe build a new one. Where to begin? You've probably got

THE KOMANDO REPORT COMPUTERS

some sort of plan in mind, but committing it to paper is another matter. Like it or not, you'll be shelling out a pretty penny for an architect, decorator or other professional to create a workable plan. Now fast-forward to the present. You've got the same idea, but where to begin?

Instead of paying a high-priced professional to transform your ideas into plans, you spend a fraction of those costs on software for your personal computer. In just a



With or without posies? Sierra's CompleteHome lets you contemplate this dilemma.

few hours, professional custom plans are spitting out of your ink-jet printer. What's more, you can see the completed project in 3D on your computer monitor.

Welcome to the world of home improvement software. After exploring several software packages that fall into this category, all we can say is: While none of the programs will totally replace residential architects, designers and decorators—they had better watch out!

Following are reviews of home improvement suites—which are complete software packages including several applications designed to meet a wide variety of home improvement needs.

CompleteHome

Sierra Home
www.sierra.com
about \$50
Windows 95/98

While CompleteHome is more a collection of individual applications than an integrated

suite, it's really quite powerful. The cornerstone of the package is Home Architect. Other applications include: Photo HomeDesigner (similar in concept to Imagine Your Complete Home & Landscape, but not as robust), 3D Deck, Home Improvement Encyclopedia, and Electrical Wiring. As an added bonus, you get a printed book called *Home Repair Essentials* that's handy even when you're not using the software. This program is also loaded with interactive help. If you don't want to start from scratch, you have two options. First, you can load one of the hundreds of designs that are included with the program. Your other option is the Quick Design wizard. This allows you to simply describe the house you want to build. Once you're done, the program assembles the house you've described into a floor plan. Then you have the chance to see how your

original idea fared in the digital zone.

I especially liked Home Architect's interface. The program splits the screen in two. On the left, you see the floor plan. The right side displays

a three-dimensional rendering of the house. What's more, by using a little controller under the rendering, you can take a real-time walk-through of the house (complete with the sound of your footsteps) any time you want.

Imagine Your Complete Home & Landscape

MacMillan Digital
www.macmillansoftware.com
about \$50
Windows 95/98

When we look at any software suite, there are a few things that we look for, no matter what category the software happens to fall into. Among them:

- Integration. Do the programs really work together, or do they just happen to be thrown into the same box?
- Ease of use. When the program loads for the first time, is it somewhat obvious what you're supposed to do?
- Help. For the parts that aren't obvious,

(Please turn to page 34)

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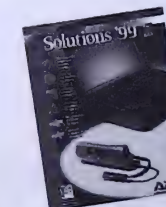
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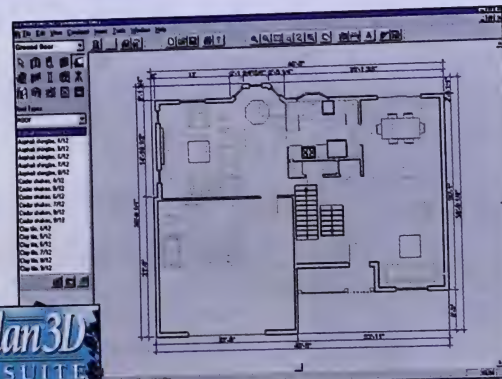
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Technology



You can get as creative as you like with this FloorPlan 3D software.



is it easy to get to the information you need?

On all three counts, Imagine Your Complete Home & Landscape delivers. This package includes five modules: Deck, Pool and Hot Tub; Interior Design; Dream Home; Landscape; and Remodeling. You start with a photograph of your house. Then, using basic drag-and-drop techniques, you exchange elements in the picture with photographs of other elements on one of the five CDs. For example, suppose you're considering replacing a window on the front of your house. You bring in a digital image of your house (using a scanner or digital camera). Next, you outline the window you want to replace. Then you drag the window you want from a floating palette to the outlined area. Bingo! You've got a new window. The program automatically scales the new window to fit the area you outlined. The advantage is that you see your changes in photographic quality.

This software has a great help program. For starters, there's a collection of fully narrated video tutorials that show you step by step how to perform various tasks. There's also built-in voice and video help. As you become more familiar with the program, you can turn these handholders off.

We've got one complaint. Imagine Your Complete Home & Landscape works with photographs, so it's great for visualizing this change or that. However, if you want to print out plans or produce a list of materials, this is not the best program for you. If you would be satisfied printing out a picture, handing it to a contractor, and saying, "Here, make it look like this," this is a very easy and powerful program.

FloorPlan 3D Design Suite

IMSI

www.imsisoft.com

about \$55

Windows 95/98

This package comes with four separate appli-

cations: FloorPlan 3D, 3D Garden Designer, HomeStyles Home Design Encyclopedia and TurboProject Express. While FloorPlan 3D doesn't offer all the touchy-feely help of the other programs reviewed thus far, it does offer some powerful tools to help you address the task at hand. The program's biggest claim to fame is the availability of photorealistic 3D renderings that allow you to see what your dream house will really look like. Believe me, this is a mixed blessing.

On my Pentium II 350-MHz machine, I let the program churn away for nearly 30 minutes so I could see a photorealistic image of a kitchen with a refrigerator in it. In frustration, I finally clicked the stop button to see what the program had come up with so far. While the photorealistic effect was interesting, I didn't find it especially useful.

One of the biggest drawbacks to FloorPlan 3D is that it doesn't come with any sample floor plans. If you're not ready to start from scratch, this isn't the program for you.

3D Home DesignSuite

Broderbund

www.broderbund.com

About \$55

Windows 95/98

The less said about this package the better. It's a classic example of a few CDs being thrown into a box and labeled a suite. Even the inside packaging makes it clear that these four programs—3D Home Architect, 3D Home Interiors, Imagine Your Landscape and HomeTime Projects—weren't necessarily meant to be together. 3D Home Architect is the least intuitive of the floor plan designers reviewed here. You launch the program and are essentially left staring at a blank screen and a toolbar. Some might argue that this is what the manual is for. However, we've always believed that a good program for the home user should invite you to get your feet wet at least a little before you crack the manual. To add insult to injury, the programs bundled into this suite aren't even current versions. While the suite includes 3D



Home Architect 2.0 and 3D Interiors 1.2, Broderbund is shipping 3D Home Architect 3.0 and 3D Interiors 2.0 as separate products—for \$50 each. We took 3D Home Architect 3.0 for a short spin and didn't find it any

more intuitive than its predecessor. Honestly, you'd be better off investing your \$50 on one of the other programs reviewed here.

You can find Kim Komando's site on the Internet at www.komando.com.

(Please turn to page 36)



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Technology

The Way To San Jose

BY TOBEY GRUMET



The purple and orange Tech Museum looms over downtown San Jose.

Remember walking

through your local natural history museum? Remember the feelings of wonder and excitement as you looked at reconstructed dinosaur bones, DNA molecules or the inside of a giant redwood tree? You could have spent hours just looking, touching and interacting with all kinds of history, technology and science, right? Recently, I visited a museum that recaptured those feelings of wonder—with a new technological twist.

The new Tech Museum of Innovation in downtown San Jose, Calif., is really the first museum specifically built to display new

MEDIA technologies and real-time interactivity rather than science. And what better place to plop this orange and violet concrete structure than Silicon Valley, the true home of high tech?

The museum is made up of three levels, two of which are browsable. There's also a Sony IMAX theater, which is always a treat, especially after spending a few hours walking around the four exhibit areas. First thing to remember if you're going to check this place out: There are tons of kids. The museum was built for children grades six and up, so you might want to consider arriving later in the afternoon, around 2 or 3 pm, after the throngs of students have gone back to their schools.

Everything in The Tech was made to stimulate your senses, and every exhibit is explained in easy-to-understand language. The Center of the Edge, on the bottom level, includes an exhibit on Mass Hallucinations, allowing you to see yourself in real time as a computer enhances your image with special effects.

It's like looking at your face in a fun house mirror.

In the Communications area, you can send and receive fiberoptic messages in an exhibit bedecked with wires and lights. Or send a live video signal to a satellite using a professional video camera. And for the openly paranoid, there's an area explaining who can read your e-mail. Answer: your boss, system operators, the police, among others.

I loved the areas marked "workshops," where you can sit down with one or

two others and play with varied electronic components to your heart's delight. There's even one stand where kids are handed a screwdriver and a pair of goggles and told to take apart a computer.

Upstairs, you'll find a complete Robotics section, including a virtual design studio. There's also a virtual bobsled ride, as well as a camera to take a picture of your face. The image is then inserted into four different scenes, which include a pair of cloned sheep and a hockey player's mask, that you'll find on monitors mounted on the ceiling.

If you're in the mood for a bit of sadism, go check out the genetically altered mice. I was attracted to this area by the cute, chubby mice I saw in the first glass cage. But as I looked closer, these were really obese mice, used for a study on human obesity, injected with a hormone that allowed them to eat and eat and eat without realizing they were full.

In the cage below them, you'll find a pile of smaller brown mice huddled in the corner of their cage. These mice are "heart disease mice" injected with a human gene to make them 20 times more likely to develop hardened arteries and other health problems. This, strangely enough, was the only part of the museum where I encountered no lines or children.

The ground level of The Tech is where you get your tickets, grab an overpriced burger and play with some oversize technologically advanced exhibits.

The Tech Museum of Innovation is located at 201 S. Market St., San Jose, CA. You can obtain hours and other information by calling 408-294-TECH. Or you can visit the museum's Web site at www.thetech.org. **PM**

What a shot!

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Photo by: Larry Dale Gordon

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Science

Throwing A Wrench At Cancer

BY JIM WILSON



By preventing the production of critical proteins, antisense drugs throw a wrench in the molecular machinery of diseases.

■ A brand-new class of

drugs soon to appear on pharmacy shelves could change the practice of medicine as profoundly as the introduction of antibiotics. Known as "antisense drugs," they will work unlike any medicine ever created. Instead of attacking the bacteria or viruses that cause diseases they will literally throw a wrench into the portion of a cell's genetic machinery that produces disease-related proteins.

The first antisense drug, Vitravene, recently won FDA approval for use as a treatment for a viral infection that can rapidly blind ad-

BIOTECHNOLOGY

vanced-stage AIDS patients. Its developer, Isis Pharmaceuticals of Carlsbad, Calif., (www.isisp.com) has six other antisense drugs in various stages of testing.

Industry analysts believe that over the next several years the dozen or so other companies that specialize in this new technology will seek FDA permission to market antisense drugs that can treat infectious, inflammatory and cardiovascular diseases. The most striking application for antisense drugs, however, promises to be in fighting the approximately

200 diseases we collectively refer to as cancer.

The versatility of antisense drugs derives from the fact that, after water, our bodies are made mostly of proteins. Remove the moisture and protein from a typical adult and what's left won't quite fill a cigar box. Proteins occupy a similarly large place in medicine because, in addition to building bodies, they also regulate body functions. Proteins carry and translate the instructions for building new cells. A class of proteins known as enzymes speeds up chemical reactions. Proteins form the pipes and pumps that move raw materials into cells and carry out finished products—mostly other proteins. When we cut ourselves, or inhale or ingest an infectious organism, proteins in the form of antibodies rush

to the rescue. They attach themselves to the invaders, then round them up for scavenger cells to destroy. You're not aware of this ongoing drama unless you get sick—usually very, very sick. If, for example, your body produces too little of the protein insulin you will be diagnosed with diabetes mellitus.

The Protein Train

Antisense technology is appealing to pharmaceutical companies because it has the potential to treat both a large number and a wide range of diseases. In theory, the therapeutic potential of antisense drugs is limited only by the human body itself. "We could make antisense drugs for every gene," predicts Isis founder and CEO Stanley T. Crooke.

To understand how this might be possible, imagine a protein as being a freight train. Trains are assembled from specific types of rolling stock—boxcars, coal hoppers, tanker cars and so on. To be useful for a particular job, a train has to be made from the right type of rolling stock. A train consisting of coal hoppers isn't very useful to the operator of an oil refinery. The rolling stock for the human body's protein train consists of 20 different amino acids. And an improperly assembled

protein can't do its job either.

Antisense drugs work by preventing improperly assembled protein trains from ever leaving the cellular station. To produce a protein, the cell first makes a messenger RNA (mRNA) copy of the gene containing the necessary information. "This message is then read by the cell and translated into the process to produce the protein," explains Crooke.

Protein production is a complex, two-step process. The first step, called transcription, occurs in the nucleus. This is the part of the cell that holds the DNA, or genetic recipe for life. The recipe for a particular protein is copied from a section of DNA—a gene—into mRNA. The mRNA then leaves the nucleus. The second step, called translation, occurs in the surrounding area, outside the nucleus but inside the membrane that forms the cell wall. Amino acids floating in this viscous sea of cytoplasm couple to each other, in the precise order specified by the mRNA. The finished product: a new protein that can become part of a muscle, eyeball or toenail.

Antisense technology uses synthetic DNA or RNA—called oligonu-

cleotides—to block the production of faulty proteins. "An antisense drug specifically binds to the mRNA coding for a target protein to prevent the cell from using that mRNA to make the target [disease-associated] protein," says Crooke. These custom-designed compounds are called antisense drugs because their molecular structure is the opposite of the "sense" or pattern of the original mRNA.

A Sense Of Antisense

Returning to our protein-train analogy, antisense drugs can be envisioned as obsessive rail yard supervisors who do not simply cross out instructions for the wrong types of rolling stock, but carefully write over the letters of the misprint, in ink that exactly matches the color of the paper. Instructions that can't be read can't be executed—to make freight trains or proteins.

In medicine, simple theories usually prove difficult to execute. It took 20 years for the theory behind antisense technology to mature into the first commercial product. Initially, scientists believed that antisense drugs would target cells with

such precision that they could cause few side effects. But as tests with animals began, the first antisense agents proved too toxic to be practical. Many of the first firms in the business suffered the same fate as their laboratory animals.

Industry analysts now believe that most of the development and manufacturing difficulties associated with producing large quantities of the synthetic nucleic acids needed to make antisense drugs have been licked. There is, however, the question of whether all disease-causing genes will be as easily deactivated as those that cause the diseases for which the first antisense drugs were developed.

Although antisense drugs may someday defeat a broad range of diseases, their most important contribution is likely to be in the war on cancer. Current cancer treatments rely on surgery, chemotherapy and radiation to beat masses of renegade cells into submission. By throwing a carefully aimed wrench at malfunctioning genetic machinery, antisense drugs could, in a manner of speaking, stop the cancer before it begins.

PM

BUSCH

BEER



Automotive

Reports From Around The World



Nissan's new Maxima is quieter and smoother than before, thanks in part to a much stiffer structure.

2000 Nissan Maxima

The Maxima's place in life is a lonely one. It lives somewhere between the ordinary Camrys and Accords, and the less ordinary Audis and BMWs. It's a sedan that delivers the reliability of the former with the performance and personality of the latter—all at a price somewhere in between. The 2000 Maxima continues down this same solitary road, only now it does it with more interior room, a larger trunk, a longer wheelbase and 222 hp.

Still available in GXE, sporty SE and luxurious GLE trim, all Maximas are powered by the same 3.0-liter DOHC 24-valve V6, which is bolted to either a very silky four-speed automatic (standard on GLE) or a five-speed

NEW CARS

manual. The increase in power over last year's 190-hp engine is courtesy of improved breathing, including the Nissan Variable Induction System that switches between long and short intake runners according to engine speed, and a new variable capacity muffler that reduces back pressure when the engine is revved over 2000 rpm. At any rpm, the V6 is strong and smooth.

—Scott Oldham

2000 Chevrolet Impala

We all remember fondly the original '60s and '70s Impalas. Enter the '00s and the latest corporate vision of a sporty sedan called Impala. Few will confuse the new front-drive V6-powered antelope-boasting sedan with its ancestors.

Taken on its own, it's a value-packed midsize



2000 CHEVROLET IMPALA

conveyance. The list of features goes on: ABS, traction control, tire-inflation warning, 16-in. wheels, aluminum alloy front subframe and steering knuckles, dual-control a/c, steering-wheel-mounted a/c and much, much more. More important, the driving experience is excellent. Powerful, grabby brakes that don't feel like you're stepping on a stuffed animal, steering with good on-center feel and precise tracking make this a driver's car. The interior is roomy, comfortable and bursting with standard features that other cars in this class charge you for.

—Mike Allen

2000 Toyota Tundra

Unlike its predecessor, the undersized, underpowered T-100, Tundra appears to match the performance and towing strength of America's trio of traditional full-size pickups. This time, Toyota seems to have it right, with Tundra offering impressive mechanical competence



and a cabin with amenities that lean more toward the comfort of a sedan than to that of a capable work truck. Base engine is a 3.4-liter 190-hp V6, optional is a 4.7-liter 245-hp V8. Body styles include standard cab with 8-ft. bed and four-door Access Cab with 6½-ft. bed. Two- or four-wheel drive is available. Overall, the cabin will impress you as slightly less roomy than its U.S. counterparts, but more carlike in its details. Ride motion is more akin to a sedan than a truck, too.

—Jim Dunne

2000 Nissan Xterra

Based on the mechanicals of Nissan's Frontier pickup truck, calling Xterra an all-new truck is a bit of a stretch. But it does carve itself a tidy niche. And with its combination of performance and comfort, it's a good niche. Priced between \$18,000 and \$24,000,

(Please turn to page 42)

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Automotive

the Xterra offers the on-road comfort and price point of car-based SUVs, like the Toyota RAV4 and Honda CR-V. But it's larger and has a full frame, an optional V6 and plenty of off-road capability like the Toyota 4Runner, Isuzu Rodeo and Mitsubishi Montero Sport.

On the road the Xterra's ride goes beyond what has been previously accomplished with rear leaf springs, and its plasticky but useful interior is perfect for this type of vehicle. Plus, it seats



2000 NISSAN XTERRA

PHOTO BY BILL DELANEY

four very comfortably and, with the rear seats folded, easily swallows two mountain bikes. Available in two- and four-wheel drive, the Xterra comes standard with a 2.4-liter 143-hp four-cylinder and a five-speed manual. But splurge on the torquey 170-hp 3.3-liter V6, which works with either the manual or the available four-speed automatic transmission.

There are two trim levels, and each comes with standard ABS, skidplates and a 50/50-split fold-down rear seat. We also recommend the Utility Package, which adds such useful stuff as the tubular roof rack with gear basket, tubular step rails, bigger tires, six ceiling tie hooks and a first-aid kit. —S.O.

2000 Jaguar S-TYPE

This is Jaguar's comeback kid, the reasonably priced sedan based on (*gasp!*) a platform shared with parent company Ford. Rest assured, no one will confuse this with a Taurus. It's a rear-wheel-drive luxury car. Propelled by a Jaguar-assembled 4.0-liter V8 version of the engine destined for the Thunderbird, the S-TYPE's suspension is truly supple over the worst of L.A.'s freeways, and still firm enough to provide astonishing roadholding on mountain switchbacks. Jaguar's sporting image loses nothing here, nor does its luxury image. The available V6 engine is derived distantly from the Vulcan V6 in the Taurus, but seems much more powerful and smooth. The interior appointments are covered almost totally in wood and leather. Features include a voice-activated telephone and navigation system, stability control and the customary ABS and traction control. The rear seat is large and plush, and the level of fit and finish appropriate to Jag's image. Expect the S-TYPE to be competitively priced against the BMW 5 Series and the Mercedes-Benz E-Class. —M.A.



PHOTO BY LEE BICKMAN

1999 Kawasaki Drifter

The newest Kawasaki Vulcan 1500 is the Drifter, an interesting mix of yesterday and tomorrow. With its fully valanced front and rear fenders and spoked wheels, harking back to bikes of the 1940s, it has all the modern conveniences: a single-overhead-cam 1500cc V-twin engine with four valves per cylinder, electronic fuel injection, digital direct ignition and dual disc brakes. The engine mates to a five-speed transmission and shaft drive.

We rode the Drifter in both Miami and Daytona, and it drew crowds and rave reviews wherever we went. The engine starts easily, has plenty of torque, and revs to nearly 6000 rpm. The transmission shifts cleanly every time, and has its own neutral finder. Prices for the Drifter start at \$11,499. —Jim McCraw

2000 Mitsubishi Eclipse

The Mitsubishi Eclipse, longtime poster car for the hot-rod import movement, is growing up. No more turbochargers, all-wheel drive or sloping hatchback silhouette. When the 2000 Eclipse goes on sale this July it will have an all-new look, it'll measure a little over 3 in. longer and, for the first time, it'll be available with a V6 engine. There will be



three models to choose from, RS, GS and GT, ranging in price from about \$16,000 to a fully loaded \$25,000. RS cars aren't

strippers, however. They'll come standard with 15-in. wheels, power windows, power locks, air conditioning and a 2.4-liter four-cylinder making 155 hp.

The GS gets 16-in. tires. But the GT is where the action is: It comes with a 205-hp 3.0-liter V6 and either a five-speed manual or four-speed automatic that can be shifted manually. GT also gets a strut tower brace, 17-in. wheels, rocker panel bodywork, an optional rear spoiler and optional leather.

While still a hatchback, the car's coupelike roofline has increased rear headroom, while the 2-in.-longer wheelbase increases the legroom. In front, there's a twin-pod dash with better ergonomics. And side air bags will be available. —S.O.

(Please turn to page 44)

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Automotive

2000 Nissan Frontier Crew Cab

The Nissan Frontier Crew Cab will go down in history as the first compact pickup sold in America with four full-size



PHOTO BY BILL DELANEY

forward-hinged doors. By the end of '99, the larger Dodge Dakota will get four full-size doors, and next year Ford and Chevy will be fighting the door wars (see "Reinventing the Truck," April 1999, page 66).

But the Frontier Crew Cab is the first, and it's pretty cool. Sold in 2wd and 4wd versions in both XE and SE trim, the pickup offers a 170-hp 3.3-liter SOHC V6 engine. A five-speed manual and a four-speed automatic are available, with towing capacities of 3500 and 5000 pounds, respectively. ABS and skidplates are standard, as is shift on the fly on 4x4 models. And the bed is 4 1/4 ft. long.

The interior shares its dash and seats with other Frontiers and the Xterra SUV. The back seat, while useful for adults, isn't the place to be on long drives. —S.O.

DETROIT SPY REPORT

BY JIM DUNNE

2001 Chrysler Town & Country



All bundled up for security reasons, this is the 2001 version of Chrysler's minivan. While styling details are mostly hidden by the elaborate armor cladding, a few changes in the new vehicle are evident. Start at the rear

where the backlite is canted forward, taillights are wider and the rear bumper flows smoothly into the rear quarter panel at the top and ends. Two noticeable changes are seen in the sides where door handles are set lower and the mirrors offer a more aerodynamic shape. In front, headlights are taller, while the lower air intake is more rectangular. Those panels on the roof seem to hide a taller profile for more interior space.

1999 Excelsior-Henderson Super X

Another mixture of the old and the new is the Excelsior-Henderson Super X, a cruiser motorcycle that carries two famous names from the past. Built in a brand-new plant in Belle Plaine, Minn., the Super X cruiser uses a springer leading-link front suspension system with forks that go right through the front fenders, just like on the 1931 model, and a hidden single-shock rear suspension, to provide some retro appeal to the bike. The Super X is powered by a fuel-injected, DOHC eight-valve 1400cc 50° V-twin, decidedly not retro. It has a five-speed transmission and belt drive.

The huge front fork springs, valanced fenders, tall cylinders and big mufflers make the Super X look more massive than it feels. We found the engine responsive and powerful, with terrific midrange punch. The transmission shifted solidly, and the exhaust note, a bit loud with the optional slash-cut pipes, was pleasing. The front and rear disc brakes seemed particularly powerful, and an added benefit is the springer front fork, which keeps the front end from diving on hard braking. —J.M.



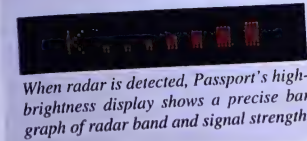
PHOTO BY MARK LANGELLO

2001 PT Cruiser

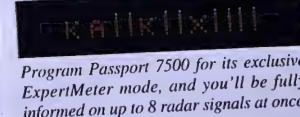
Chrysler's PT Cruiser is undergoing cold-weather testing in preparation for its show-room introduction early next year as a 2001 model. Disguise panels have been removed from this prototype, though some Velcro strips remain. Of all the design cues, only the wheels shown here and lack of Chrysler nameplates are different from anything shown at auto shows. Chrysler believes the PT Cruiser will create a new class of vehicle, one that looks like a vintage sedan, but in reality has the convenience and interior space of a modern minivan. As Chrysler officials note, the PT Cruiser is one practical vehicle that "kids in the family won't mind being seen in."



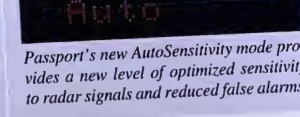
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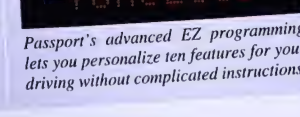
When radar is detected, Passport's high-brightness display shows a precise bar graph of radar band and signal strength.



Program Passport 7500 for its exclusive ExpertMeter mode, and you'll be fully informed on up to 8 radar signals at once.



Passport's new AutoSensitivity mode provides a new level of optimized sensitivity to radar signals and reduced false alarms.



Passport's advanced EZ programming lets you personalize ten features for your driving without complicated instructions.



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1 New 5-Sensor Laser for breakthrough Laser range



Ordinary detectors use a single laser sensor. Passport 7500's design uses special low-noise circuitry, and five high-performance laser sensors (4 front and 1 rear).

2 New 4-bit A/D converter for increased radar range

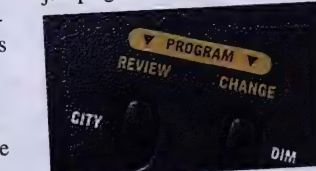
We've improved our long-range warning for all radar signals: conventional and "instant-on" X-band, K-band, and SuperWide Ka-band. The secret is advanced 4-bit analog to digital converter signal processing circuitry.

3 New AutoSensitivity Mode minimizes false alarms

Passport's computer continuously analyzes incoming signals and intelligently adjusts the sensitivity to minimize false alarms.

4 New EZ Programming lets you customize Passport

Passport 7500 comes ready to go: just plug it in and turn it on. But



our new EZ Programming also makes it easy to customize ten features for your own driving style. No other detector provides this easy-to-use flexibility.

5 New Ultra-Bright Matrix Display

Inside Passport's matrix display are 280 individual ultra-bright Hewlett-Packard LEDs. The result is a crystal-clear, ultra-bright readout.

6 New ExpertMeter tracks up to eight radar signals

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Our new optional Smart-Cord MuteDisplay is a special power cord that has a power-on indicator, a bright



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Automotive

ASIA SPY REPORT

BY SCOTT OLDHAM

2001 Toyota 4Runner



PHOTO BY HIDDEN IMAGE This new larger 4Runner will go on sale in the fall of 2000. It'll share its ladder frame, four-wheel-drive system, engines and much of its interior with Toyota's new Tundra pickup truck. And it'll be built next to the pickup at the company's all-new factory in Indiana. But the big news will be the 4Runner's optional V8 engine. The 245-hp 4.7-liter DOHC V8 makes an impressive 315 ft.-lb. of torque, more power than the larger, more expensive Land Cruiser. To counter that, expect Land Cruiser to get variable valve timing and a considerable horsepower increase. Standard 4Runner power will be the Tundra's 190-hp 3.4-liter V6.

2001 Toyota MR Spyder



Think of it as a poor man's Porsche Boxster. Just like the entry-level Porsche, the MR Spyder, which will reach Toyota dealers next spring with a price tag in the mid-20s, has two seats, a mid-mounted engine, rear drive and a foldable top. This little roadster, which weighs only 2200 pounds, is powered by a 140-hp 1.8-liter aluminum four-cylinder with variable valve timing, backed by either a five-speed manual or a four-speed automatic. Not quite the muscle to run with the twice-as-expensive Boxster, but it will run with and compete head to head with Mazda's Miata. In fact, the Spyder's dimensions are within an inch or two of the Mazda's, except for its 96.5-in. wheelbase, which is more than 7 in. longer than the Miata's. A four-wheel independent suspension, 16-in. wheels and four-wheel disc brakes are also part of the package.

2001 Toyota Avalon

With all that attention toward the youth market, Toyota isn't forgetting who made it such a wealthy automaker, the baby boomers. For them, Toyota is working hard on the next-generation Avalon. Not as stodgy as the pre-



PHOTO BY HIDDEN IMAGE sent Avalon, the car's replacement will feature crisper, harder lines, sportier suspension tuning and more horsepower. The full-size, front-wheel-drive sedan will grow a bit, nudging its overall length past 200 in., and its 3.0-liter DOHC V6 engine will handle the extra heft with variable valve timing and a bump in horsepower from 200 to 220. Six-passenger seating will still be available, and the Avalon will continue to be built at Toyota's Georgetown, Ky., plant along with the Camry.

2001 Toyota Celica



For now, Toyota is calling it the XYR Concept, but ditch the rear spoiler, un-black the windows and replace the extra-beefy 17-in. wheels and tires with 15-in., and you're looking at the next Celica. Part of Toyota's plan to attract younger, fun-seeking buyers, the next Celica, which remains

a front-wheel drive, will be powered by an all-aluminum DOHC 1.8-liter four-cylinder that cranks out a stout 180 hp at a rev-happy 7600 rpm. This is made possible by variable valve timing and a very Honda-like redline of over 8000 rpm. A more mellow 140-hp version will be standard. Four-wheel independent suspension, four-wheel disc brakes and a 2500-pound curb weight should put this car in the performance category of the VTEC Acura Integra GS-R.

2001 Toyota Solara Convertible



The drop-top version of Toyota's successful Camry Solara coupe will also go on sale in the spring of 2000.

Mechanically identical to the coupe version of the car, the Solara convertible will get a power folding top, with a full headliner, a glass rear window, automatic-down power rear-quarter windows and structural reinforcement. The conversion from coupe to ragtop will be performed by ASC in a new facility near the Toyota plant in Cambridge, Ontario. Both a four-cylinder and V6 will be available in the open four-seater. **FM**



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Outdoors

The Flying Boat

BY CLIFF GROMER



A step up from the PWC, the Sear may be the next niche in watersports.

▣ The first time I tried

hang gliding I crashed on takeoff. I had signed up for hang gliding 101 and my instructor told me to heft the wing over my head and run as fast as I could across a field. Seemed simple enough, and back in those days I was able to

AVIATION

gallop along at a pretty good clip. Trouble was, I had a trick left shoulder, and it decided to pop out just as my stride hit high gear. A nasty ground loop resulted, followed by a not-too-cheerful refund of the course fee and a red "F" on my permanent record card.

Too bad. Hang gliding is the closest I could have come to the essence of pure flight—being one with the wind and an integral part of the flying machine itself.

One step removed from the free-flight hang glider is the powered hang glider, a low-rung member in the growing family of ultralights. Bolt together a frame and attach wheels, engine, fuel tank, seat and wing and you're ready to soar with the pigeons. Powered hang gliders come in all kinds of configurations with the possible exception of a flying bath-

tub. One new design, however, comes close—the Sear 2000 flying inflatable boat. A harebrained change of pace for thrill-seeking members of the motorized bar stool crowd? Hardly. Taken in the context and accepting the limitations of an ultralight, a flying inflatable boat offers some interesting and viable possibilities.

Like most inflatables, the Sear can be used as a conventional tender for your yacht or cruiser. Then, whenever the urge strikes, bolt on the wing to convert the action from tow to go. Sear takes you where no other watercraft has gone before—up to altitudes of 10,000 ft.

If you're into remote lakes and ponds for fishing and the joy of quiet, peaceful solitude, you might be able to claw your way through the wilderness to one in your 4-by. But your land tank can't survey five lakes in 30 minutes like you can do from the air.

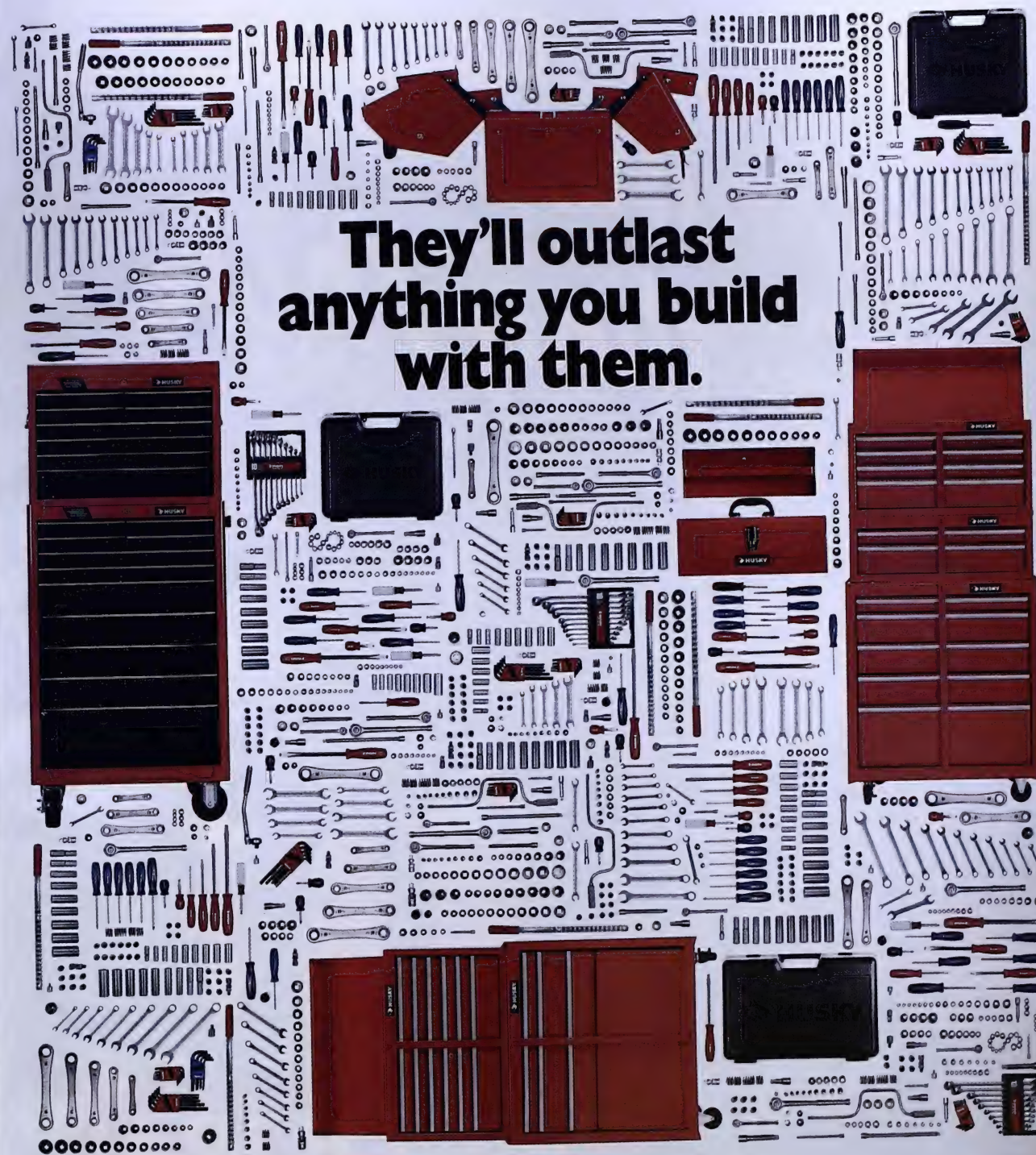
Millions of viewers already have witnessed the Sear in a dramatic rescue action sequence filmed for the "Baywatch" TV series. According to Sear pilot Stan Pace, it wasn't easy. Sea conditions at

the time were 7-ft. swells with a 2-ft. chop and an 18-knot crosswind. The boat had never before been subjected to such rough conditions in its 500 hours of testing. "At one point I had my hand on the seatbelt release button and was ready to ditch because I thought we were going over," recalls Pace. But the boat didn't go over. A conventional float plane never would have been able to handle that kind of water and wind situation.

Getting a firsthand look (and ride) in the Sear seemed a better way to spend a morning than staring blankly at my computer screen and exercising my mouse aimlessly on its pad in an effort to look busy. So I trundled off to Orlando, Fla., leaving behind a damp and frigid New York. I met the Sear folks at the boat launching site of a small public lake. The boat/plane was packed aboard a single-PWC trailer, the wing rolled up in a 19-ft.-long, 12-in.-dia. bag. It didn't take long to get the craft ready for business. Essentially, you assemble the wing and attach it to the frame that remains fixed inside the boat—about a 20-minute operation.

The Sear uses a 33-ft.-span hang glider-style weight-shift wing for climbs and turns.

(Please turn to page 51)



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Outdoors

There is no yaw control. A control bar replaces the conventional three-axis control stick/rudder arrangement of a fixed-wing design. Since bar movements produce the opposite effect from a control stick, an experienced fixed-wing pilot has some unlearning to do first.

The rigid inflatable hull (fiberglass bottom with polyethylene foam between the hull and deck) is made to Seair's specs by Patten Inflatables. The stacked 8-in.-dia. main tubes give the flotation of a single 16-in. tube but with reduced surface area (drag) for quicker take-offs. Twin 5-ft. 10-in.-long tube outriggers are out of the water during normal operation but provide a welcome measure of capsize insurance, especially during crosswind landing and taxiing. The craft is 110 in. long with a beam of 50 in. The craft weighs 450 pounds and it can carry a load of 450 pounds.

Clambering into the back seat I clap on a helmet with integral earphones, plug into the intercom and fasten my seatbelt. Pace hits the electric starter to crank the 64-hp two-stroke Rotax 582. The boat vibrates like a giant mixmaster until the engine settles down to a smooth idle. Pace goes through his checklist, taxis out into the lake, turns into the wind and squeezes the trigger throttle. The boat accelerates in a leisurely way but breaks free of the water relatively quickly. Solo, the boat will take off in as little as 50 ft. with a moderate head wind—200 ft. in no wind—and it can climb at 1800 ft. per minute.

While it may look bizarre to gawkers on the ground, a flying boat from the air feels perfectly natural. It's the open-air ultralight kind of flying that requires some adjustment. This thing is totally different from a conventional plane. Pace says "it's the freedom of flying." It may be too much freedom too soon for some. We putter along at a brisk 45 mph. With power, the control bar position is neutral and steering

inputs can be made with one finger. The wing moves around in light gusts and you just ride with it rather than fight it.

Pace kills the engine. There's a loud *Pop!* then silence. The boat seems to hang in the air and then begins a gentle descent. "It's impossible to dive this thing, even with full power and the bar pulled back," exclaims Pace. The wing is a North-wing model Mustang 19 that gives a 10:1 glide ratio and produces optimum lift and speed. It's not "floaty" like larger designs and it will cut through turbulence rather than hang there and bounce you around. The stall break is very mild and stall speed is 25 mph.

We glide down to an uneventful dead-stick landing. A 10-hour



Sans wing, Seair becomes a 50-mph airboat.

instruction course is required before Seair turns over the keys and wishes you bon voyage. Once down, you can detach the wing and the Seair becomes an airboat with a 50-mph capability. But because of its high center of gravity, you don't want to make any fancy turns.

The Seair 2000 is a two-place trainer and it costs about 26 grand. Single-seat inflatable, innovative land-trike and even amphibious ultralight models are slated to come on stream in the near future with price tags in the \$12,000 to \$15,000 range.

While not faster than a speeding bullet, nor more powerful than a locomotive, and not able to leap tall buildings in a single bound, the unique Seair still qualifies as "Superboat."

For more information, contact Seair Group, 6831 Edgewater Commerce Pkwy., Ste. 1110, Orlando, FL 32810; 888-FLY-SEAIR; www.seair.com.

FM

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Great Stuff

From home improvement to outdoors, automotive to electronics, here's the newest gear you'll want to own.

EDITED BY CLIFF GROMER

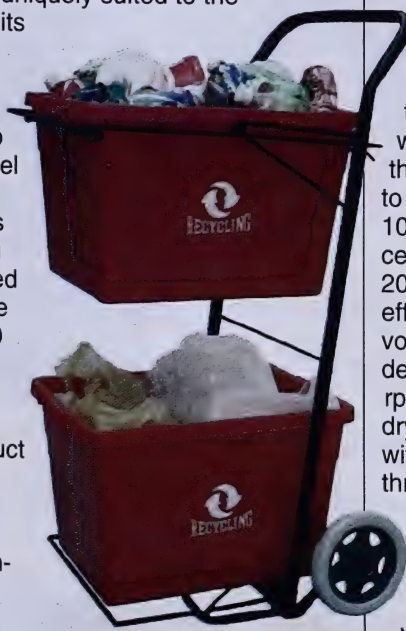
Scan Do

Kodak's new Professional 3570 Plus Rapid Film Scanner creates great high-quality digital files with speed—and it does it at a nice low price. Given its plug-and-play environment, this scanner can be integrated into almost any workplace without hassle, and uses an improved light source that

doesn't require a color filter wheel or IR filter. The 3570 Plus scans color, black-and-white film, positives and negatives, in 35mm, 46mm, 70mm and 120-format film. Retail for \$9500. Contact Eastman Kodak, 343 State St., Rochester, NY 14650; 800-235-6325.

Well Suited

Recycling is a fine idea but lugging recycling bins to the curb tends to dampen our enthusiasm for it. This device is uniquely suited to the task. Appropriately, its heavy-gauge tubing is made from recycled steel. The top rack swivels to keep the recycling bin level as you tip back and roll. Also, the rack is removable, allowing the device to be used as a hand truck. The Caddy-All costs \$70 to \$100, with an average price in the \$80 range. It's sold through home product catalogs. Contact Clipper Products, 675 Cincinnati-Batavia Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45245; 800-543-0324.



Mini Multi

Unlike most other multitools that incorporate various implements into a pliers tool, the Mini Grip Swiss Army Knife packs 13 implements, including flat- or needle-nose pliers, into its traditional knife case. The most innovative feature of the Mini Grip is its detachable socket bit holder that holds six different driver tips. The compact 3.25-in. tool features stainless steel implements and has a lifetime guarantee. You can buy it for \$99 at sporting goods stores. Contact Wenger, 15 Corporate Dr., Orangeburg, NY 10962; 800-267-3577.



Cord-Free Drywall Gun

Whether it's a small drywall job or the tail end of a major project, Porter-Cable's model 9875 cordless drywall driver is sure to be a welcome addition to the job site. Equipped with an adjustable depth-sensitive clutch, the tool is useful for metal frame fasteners and deck construction in addition to drywall work. P-C has powered its 9875 with a Magnequench motor that's claimed to be 10 percent to 20 percent more efficient than standard motors. With its 14.4-volt battery pack, the tool produces 300 watts delivered through two speed ranges of 0 to 600 rpm, and 0 to 2000 rpm. The P-C cordless drywall driver comes in a carrying case with two battery packs, a 1-hour charger, three Phillips bits and a 3/16-in. magnetic nut setter. It's expected to sell for about \$250. For more information, write to Porter-Cable, 4825 Highway 45 N., P.O. Box 2468, Jackson, TN 38302.



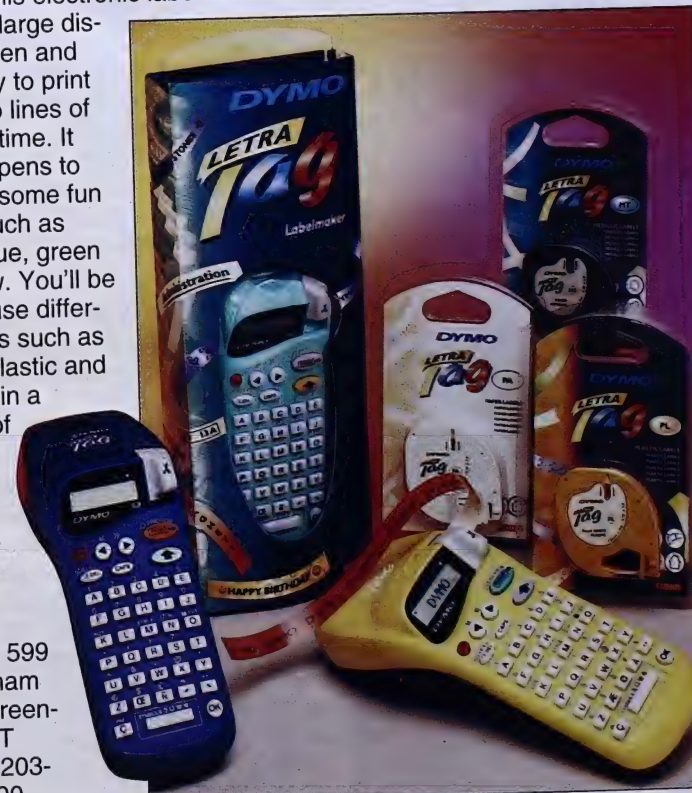
Stepping Out

Climbing in and out of a high-stance pickup or SUV can be a real workout. To ease the effort, you can either get longer legs or these neat-looking Back Country Tube Steps. Constructed of 3-in. aircraft-grade 304 mirror-polished stainless steel and available with a semi-gloss black powdercoat finish, the steps come with a lifetime warranty against rusting, pitting or flaking. Most applications utilize existing frame holes for easy installation. The tube steps are available through automotive accessories outlets for \$216 (powdercoat) and \$397 (stainless steel). Contact Design Automotive Group, 590 Bond St., Lincolnshire, IL 60069; 800-323-6147.



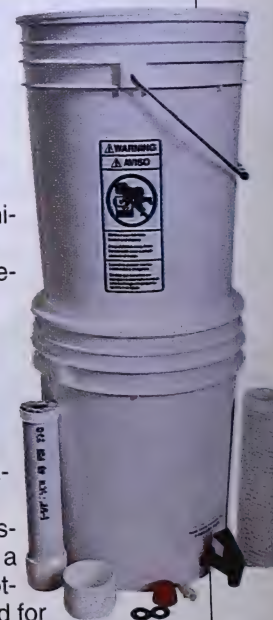
Label Me Happy

This is what's what in high-tech labeling. The Dymo-CoStar LetraTag is an electronic labeler. Designed mainly for hobbyists and do-it-yourselfers, this electronic labeler includes a color-coded ABC style keyboard, a large display screen and the ability to print up to two lines of text at a time. It also happens to come in some fun colors such as bright blue, green or yellow. You'll be able to use different tapes such as paper, plastic and metallic in a variety of colors and styles. Retail is \$29.99. Contact Dymo-CoStar, 599 W. Putnam Ave., Greenwich, CT 06830; 203-661-9700.



Clean Water For All

The simple and inexpensive Mission Filter purification system can supply a family of five to 10 with potable water. The unit consists of a pair of 5-gal. buckets, lids, filters and fittings. To destroy disease-causing organisms, contaminated water is mixed with household chlorine bleach in the top bucket. It then passes through activated charcoal and polypropylene filters. Safe-to-drink water is dispensed through a spigot on the bottom bucket. Sold for about \$50 by Eagle Spring Drinking Water Systems of Holly Hill, Fla. (800-881-7620), the Mission Filter is designed for disaster relief areas and as a household emergency system.



Great Stuff

Down To Earth

Even if it looks like it should be cutting turf in outer space, Yard-Man's 20-hp. tractor is a down-to-earth machine. To drive it, move the console shift lever into Drive or Reverse and step on the pedal. The further you press, the faster the tractor goes up to its top speed of about 5 mph. Below the tractor is a 46-in., three-blade deck that mounts and removes without tools. The turning radius has been reduced by nearly a third compared to previous models, due to automotive-like geared steering and a caster-camber wheel design that also improves tire wear, increases the machine's straight-line steering stability and reduces turning effort. It costs about \$2000 at home centers. Contact MTD, P.O. Box 368022, Cleveland, OH 44136.



Stop Light

The "thud" method of parking in your garage may have its merits, but the Car Stop precision parking system can help cut down on

those whiplash bills. Mounted on your garage door opener or ceiling, the system projects a bright red laser



dot on your dash to tell you when you've gone far enough. Car Stop works on low power seconds after you activate the garage door opener. It sells for \$29.95 from Pedestal, 1114 E. 6th Ave., Emporia, KS 66801; 800-550-8425; www.pedestalcorp.com.



Wake Maker

Toyota wants to make waves with its new Epic X22 wakeboard boat. Based on the open-bow Epic 22 recreational model, the X22 features an integrated tower, a 70-gal. ballast system with pushbutton pumping, and new interior and exterior design. The multievent hull has two tracking fins for stability, while the marinized Lexus V8 coupled to a Hurth transmission moves things along with 300 hp and 310 ft.-lb. of torque. The X22 is available through Toyota Marine dealers for \$35,575. For more information, call 1-800-975-EPIC; www.marine.toyota.com.



What To Do

What do you do when you need to trim, but a string trimmer really doesn't do what you want? One option is to use Stihl's FH 75 power scythe. Think of it as a cross between a string trimmer and a hedge trimmer—at the end of its 59-in.-long shaft is a 12-in.-long reciprocating cutter head that adjusts from 0° to 90°. It's designed to cut anything from tough, fibrous plants to ordinary grass. Unlike a string trimmer, it doesn't throw the cut vegetation aside. The vegetation falls over as you mow along. It costs about \$570 at Stihl dealers. Contact the company at P.O. Box 2015, Virginia Beach, VA 23450.

(More Great Stuff on page 56)



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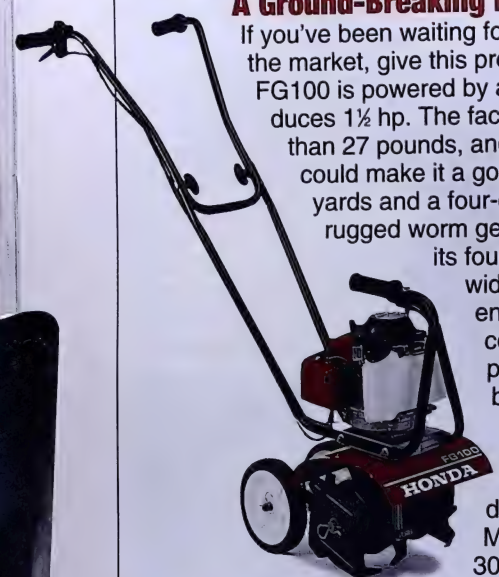
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Great Stuff

A Ground-Breaking Product

If you've been waiting for a four-cycle minitiller to break into the market, give this product a look. The Honda Harmony FG100 is powered by a tiny 35cc four-cycle engine that produces 1½ hp. The fact that it's small, weighing slightly less than 27 pounds, and is powered by a four-cycle engine could make it a good fit for homeowners with small yards and a four-cycle lawnmower. Honda chose a rugged worm gear transmission to transmit power to its four tine blades. The machine tills a 9-in. width, and Honda says that it's agile enough to till within 1 in. of plants. It comes with a carrying handle and a pair of transport wheels. Aerator blades, a border-edger attachment and a dethatcher are available as accessories. It costs about \$350 at Honda outdoor power equipment dealers. Contact American Honda Motor, River Green Pkwy., Duluth, GA 30096; 800-426-7701.



More Grip—Less Slip

Craftsman adds a new twist to the old adjustable wrench with its Craftsman Clench Wrench. With the tool's spring-loaded self-adjusting jaw, the harder you pull, the tighter it grips. The self-ratcheting feature maintains continuous contact with the fastener on its flats, not its corners. The 8-in. Clench Wrench costs \$19.99 and handles ½-in. to ⅞-in. (10mm to 18mm) fasteners. A 10-incher for \$24.99 handles ½-in. to 1-in. (13mm to 25mm) fasteners. The set costs \$39.99 at Sears stores. Check it out online at www.sears.com/craftsman.



Help In A Tight Spot

For a homeowner, plumbing can be a real backbreaker. Enter Speedi Plumb Plus braided hose connectors. They consist of an inner hose of extremely tough and flexible rubber. The hose is protected by a braided plastic jacket that resists just about any household chemical that comes its way. This construction makes the connector more flexible than those made from stainless steel hose, says the manufacturer, making it ideal in tight spots. You can get one to make just about any connection, from faucets, toilets and washing machines to water heaters, ice makers and humidifiers. The connectors are approved by IAPMO (the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials). They range in price from \$7 to \$19 at hardware stores and home centers. Contact PlumbShop, 39600 Orchard Hill Place, Novi, MI 48375.



High-Tech Detector

In the "us versus them" wars, Escort's new Passport 7500 is one for our side. In addition to improved radar and laser detection performance, the unit's AutoSensitivity feature uses an internal computer to continuously analyze incoming signals and adjust the sensitivity circuitry to minimize false alarms. An optional SmartCord Mute Display incorporates the alert display and mute button on the lighter power plug, allowing the detector to operate in the dark mode for discreet night driving. The Passport 7500 is available for \$229.95 (SmartCord is \$29.95 extra) direct from Escort, 5440 West Chester Rd., West Chester, OH 45069; 800-588-4961.



Slush Busters

Most folks today wouldn't be caught dead wearing a pair of ugly galoshes. The new overshoe to keep you in step when foul weather, snow or slush are out to attack your favorite dress shoes or sneakers is called New England Overshoe. Unlike traditional overshoes, these waterproof slipovers, available in a variety of models, provide warmth, traction and style. And many scrunch up to store in your bag or briefcase. The overshoes sell for \$39.99 to \$84.99 depending on the model, and you'll find them at outdoors stores and in catalogs. Contact New England Overshoe, 176 Battery St., Burlington, VT 05401; 888-289-6367; www.overshoe.com.

Wider is Better.



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The wider the hull, the quicker the turn. The WideTrack™ Grand Prix® has its wheels set wide to connect all available 240 horsepower* to the road. And with its speed-sensitive steering technology, it delivers precise cornering and control. So hold tight in every turn and discover: Wider is Better. Starting at \$20,050 MSRP! GT model shown: \$21,780 MSRP!

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DSPM-10

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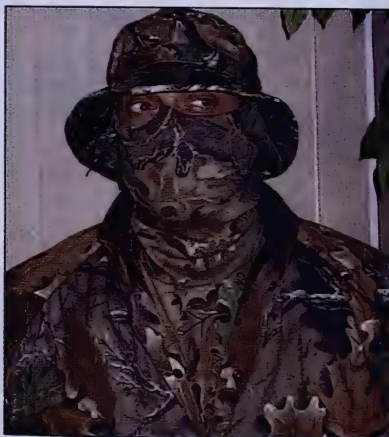
Great Stuff



Get A Grip

The Stanley StudGrabber is a new solution for hanging tools and equipment out of the way. The StudGrabber is a piece of corrosion-resistant wire bent so that

when placed around a 2 x 4, the two ends dig into and grip the sides of the wood. As weight on the StudGrabber increases, the wire ends increase their grip. A single StudGrabber safely holds up to 25 pounds. It comes in two models: a single utility hook (model 81-9215), and a double-pronged hanger (model 81-9250) for shovels and rakes. StudGrabbers can also be hooked to overhead joists for attic storage and are ideal temporary hangers for the job site. StudGrabbers are available in packs of six for under \$18 at home centers and hardware stores. Contact The Stanley Works, 1000 Stanley Dr., New Britain, CT 06053.

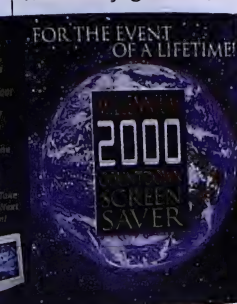


Hide And Seek

Camo clothing takes the next step with the Deceptor Collar dickey that provides total concealment when worn with regular camo gear. Made of a tight knit stretch fabric, the Deceptor covers the entire area from chest to cap when in conceal mode. The dickey snugs up to your face, hugs your neck, seals out bugs and seals in body heat. When concealment isn't required, it folds down to a conventional turtleneck collar. The Deceptor costs \$14.95 from Two Painted Ponies, 7616 Dover Ln., Fort Worth, TX 76118; 877-265-5277.

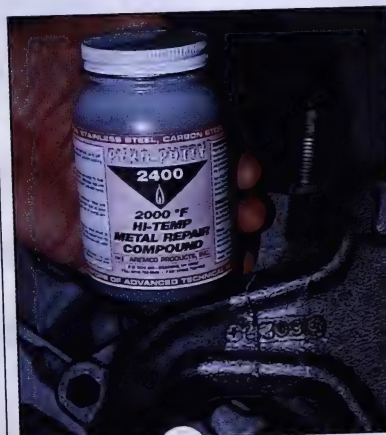
Countdown To The Millennium

Truly a screen saver to carry you into the future, the Millennium 2000 Countdown Day-Savor automatically greets you each day



with a countdown clock to the year 2000 along with 500 facts, full-screen color images and music. Introduced by the folks at KaizenWorks

Publishing, this software is customizable and includes a letter-style printout. So if you're looking forward to the new millennium, here's a colorful way to count down to the big day. Retail for \$16.95. Contact KaizenWorks Publishing, 1233 Wilshire Blvd., No. 320, Santa Monica, CA 90403.

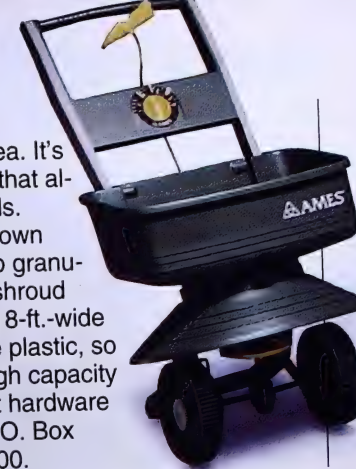


Hot Stuff

Auto exhaust systems go about their job with no moving parts, but components can crack, warp or corrode. Pyro-Putty 2400 is a new ceramic-metallic sealant and metal repair compound that resists temperatures to 2000° F. The water-based single-component system repairs cast-iron, steel and stainless steel manifolds, headers, pipes and mufflers, sealing cracks and holes up to 3/8 in. wide. The putty cures at room temperature and is machinable and paintable. A 16-ounce can of the stuff costs \$24.95 from Aremco Products, P.O. Box 429, Ossining, NY 10562; 914-762-0685.

Spread It Around

Here's a doubleheader we think is a good idea. It's a combination drop and broadcast spreader that allows you to adjust spreading width in seconds. Loosen the shroud knob, move the shroud down and tighten the knob. This allows you to drop granular materials in a 24-in.-wide path. With the shroud up, you can broadcast the materials over an 8-ft.-wide path. The hopper is made from polyethylene plastic, so it resists chemical deterioration. It has enough capacity for 2 1/2 bags of fertilizer. It costs about \$80 at hardware stores and home centers. Contact Ames, P.O. Box 1774, Parkersburg, WV 26101; 800-725-9500.



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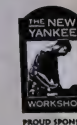
Nothing compares to the warm, rich look of wood furniture that only comes with age. But often, it's hidden by a dark, worn finish.

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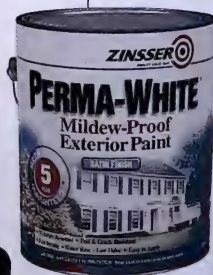
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Great Stuff

Bright And Shiny

Newly painted siding looks fresh and attractive until mildew sets in.

Zinsser introduces Perma-White, a tintable bright white 100 percent acrylic resin paint with a five-year mildewproof guarantee. It resists mildew by forming a tough, dense, flexible and glossy paint film, Zinsser says. The paint prevents dirt and mildew spores from sticking, and its gloss and density allow dirt to simply wash off with the rain. Its toughness makes it resistant to weathering. The paint's second line of defense is a slow-release mildewicide that kills mildew over the paint's service life. A gallon costs about \$25 to \$29 at hardware stores, paint stores and home centers. Contact William Zinsser & Co., 173 Belmont Dr., Somerset, NJ 08875.

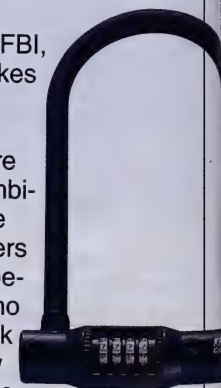


Gripper

Most tires lose wet traction performance as they wear. Bridgestone's new Turanza Rev uses several technologies to enhance wet traction. A special rubber compound reduces the effect of friction-related rubber hardening—one of the causes of reduced wet traction. A dual-layer tread uses a layer of high-grip rubber beneath the tread blocks. As the tread wears, it exposes the high-grip rubber that offsets the effects of wear on wet braking and handling. The new tires are available in H-, V- and Z-ratings in 14-in. to 17-in. sizes. Prices range from \$97 to \$276 each at all Bridgestone/Firestone tire dealers. Call 800-807-9555 to find the nearest dealer.

Go Keyless

According to the FBI, some 440,000 bikes are stolen each year. While bike U-locks offer more security than combination-style cable locks, a lot of riders prefer the latter because there are no keys to keep track of. Kryptonite now gives you both the security of a 4 x 8 x 1/2-in.-dia. hardened carbon-alloy steel U-lock and a resettable four-digit combination locking mechanism. The lock weighs less than 2 pounds, comes with a bike bracket and costs \$31.95 at bike dealers and sporting goods stores. Contact Kryptonite, 320 Turnpike St., Canton, MA 02021; 800-SAY-LOCK; www.kryptonitelock.com.



Clean It First

In some respects surface preparation is worse than actually painting a surface. Liquid TSP Substitute is a product formulated to make the job a little easier by allowing you to wipe a surface clean then move on to the next area without having to rinse.

One quart of the cleaner can be diluted to make 4 gal. of cleaner, or enough cleaner to wash 1600 sq. ft. of surface or a smaller area if a more concentrated solution is called for. If trisodium phosphate (TSP) is not available in your area, the product is well worth considering. A quart costs about \$5, and a gallon \$15, at hardware stores, paint stores and home centers. Contact Savogran, 259 Lenox St., P.O. Box 130, Norwood, MA 02062; 800-225-9872.



Two-fer Tiller

It would be nice to have two tillers. You could use a rear-tine model for heavy sod busting and tilling, and a front-tine machine for cultivating and yardwork. You can come pretty close to this ideal with Versa Tiller, a 5-hp, 12-in. tiller with handles that swing through 180°, allowing it to be easily converted from a rear-tine model to a front-tine model. With



two accessories that cost about \$30 each, the \$800 machine can be converted into an edger or an aerator. Also increasing its versatility is its adjustable tilling width. Remove the outside tines and the machine tills a 7 1/2-in.-wide swath. It's sold at Troy-Bilt dealers and directly from the factory. Contact Troy-Bilt, 1 Garden Way, Troy, NY 12180; 800-828-5500.

Ride The Wave

Bose has introduced its new Wave Radio/CD, a simple touch-controlled device giving you clock and radio features as well as CD functions. The company's waveguide technology produces accurate sound from an extremely small enclosure, where no dimension is over one-quarter of an inch. Also interesting is its ability to connect to any Bose-powered loudspeakers to become the center control for a full high-fidelity system. Retail is \$499. Contact Bose, The Mountain, Framingham, MA 01701; 800-919-BOSE.



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by Sarah

1
Puron makes
things cold

2
People will
save money

3
Pretty soon
they're not
going to
make the
old kind
of air
conditioners
anymore

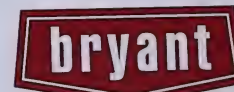
4
Puron was
tested for
3 years in
lots of houses
and it works
great

5
Puron will
make
the planet
happy

6
Puron
is good



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You've got a shortbed pickup and you've got to haul a longbed load. No problem. Extend-A-Bed is a platform extension with stake pockets that installs in a standard 2-in. receiver hitch in less than 5 minutes. The platform extends 3 ft.

beyond the tailgate, giving you a 23-sq.-ft. work platform or extension for long loads. Extend-A-Bed sells for \$449.95 and the optional aluminum sides shown here add \$289.95. Steel sides cost \$179.95. Contact Extend-A-Bed, 1445 Bender Rd., Chaska, MN 55318; 877-398-3632.



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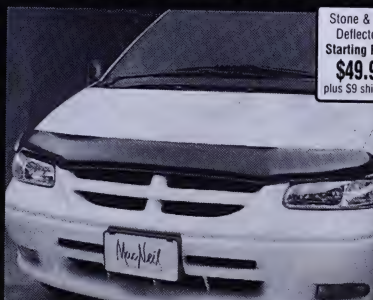
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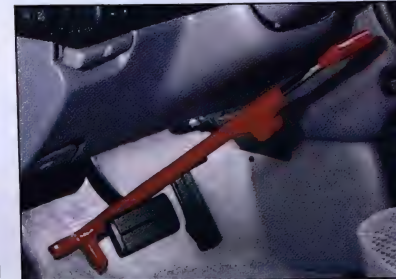
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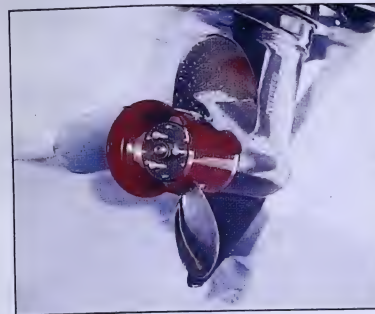
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Many steering wheel antitheft locks can be defeated by cutting the steering wheel, typically a thin metal core covered by foam padding. But the UnBRAKEable AutoLock slides over the top of the brake pedal arm and locks the pedal. Nothing connects to the steering wheel. AutoLock is forged from hardened steel and has a protective coating. Brake pedals are made of solid steel and are almost impossible to cut. It fits most cars and trucks, and costs \$59.95 at mass merchandisers. Contact Lawman Armor, 1434 Sugartown Rd., Berwyn, PA 19312; 610-296-1948.

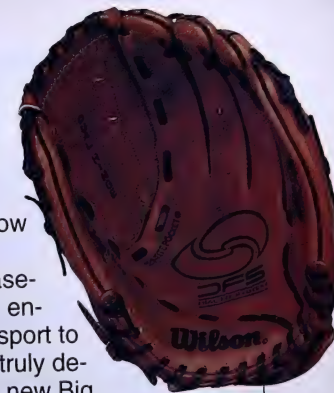


Some boaters keep a collection of props for different boating needs. Now all they need is one—the Vari-Prop adjustable propeller. Operated from the helm, the prop can be set on automatic, which adjusts blade angle for optimum performance. The fixed max pitch setting gives you top speed. The shifting range is from 24 in. to Reverse, and the three-blade configuration. The prop uses self-aligning with outboard and sterndrive at marine outlets. Contact Vari-Prop, 10000 S. Bascom Ave., Suite 100, San Jose, CA 95128; 415-961-6122.



prop mates to any standard spline configuration. The prop uses self-contained hydraulics and will work with outboard and sterndrive engines. It sells for about \$1200 at marine outlets. Contact Vari-Prop International, P.O. Box 1856, Cottonwood, CA 96022; 530-347-6122.

It's spring, and you know what that means—baseball! And to enhance this sport to the glory it truly deserves, the new Big Sweet Spot design is being added to Dual Fit System (DFS) gloves DFS3 and DFS4—offering a 15 percent larger prime catching area. These gloves also feature hard openings and backs, and soft thick leather for an easy break-in period. Retails for \$131. Contact Wilson Sporting Goods, 8700 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631; 773-714-6400.



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Portable watercraft take on new practicality with the Puffin foldable kayak. Weighing only 19 pounds, the 10.5-ft. boat can be stuffed into a 28 x 12 x 12-in. duffel. Made up of a heavy-duty skin stretched over a framework of anodized aircraft-grade aluminum, with inflatable compartments, Puffin will carry 250 pounds of cargo, and is easier to paddle than inflatables. The kayak costs \$799, making it one of the least expensive folding boats. Contact Scan Sport, P.O. Box 700, Enfield, NH 03748; 603-632-9500; www.pakboats.com.



Great Stuff

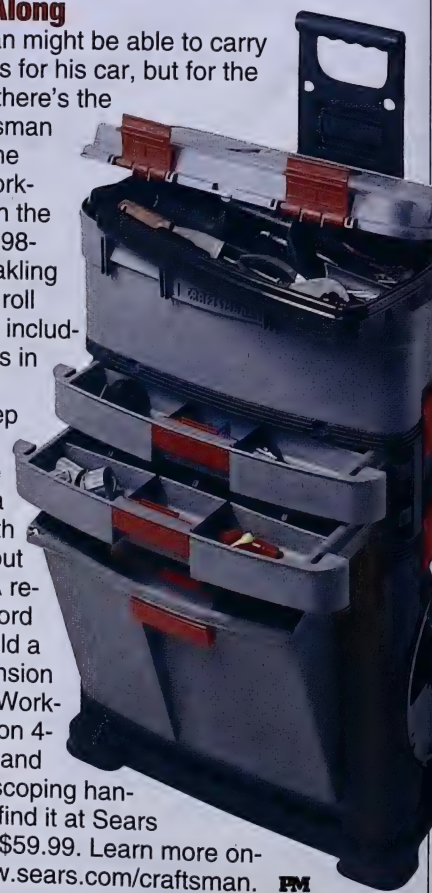


Hot Times

You'd be surprised at how temperature can help as a diagnostic tool in troubleshooting brakes, ignitions, cooling systems and electrical systems. Raytek's Mini-Temp pocket-size thermometer uses noncontact infrared technology to do just that. Simply aim the unit from up to 6 ft. away, pull the trigger and read the temperature on the display. The unit, powered by a 9-volt battery, measures the infrared energy radiating from the source. MiniTemps cost \$99 (\$139 with laser sighting) at auto parts outlets. Contact Raytek, P.O. Box 1820, Santa Cruz, CA 95061; 800-866-5478.

Tooling Along

Hulk Hogan might be able to carry all the tools for his car, but for the rest of us there's the new Craftsman three-in-one Rolling Workshop. Even the proverbial 98-pound weakling can easily roll everything including air tools in the Workshop's deep storage bin. Above the bin is a toolbox with two slide-out drawers. A removable cord reel will hold a 50-ft. extension cord. The Workshop rolls on 4-in. wheels and has a telescoping handle. You'll find it at Sears outlets for \$59.99. Learn more online at www.sears.com/craftsman. **PM**



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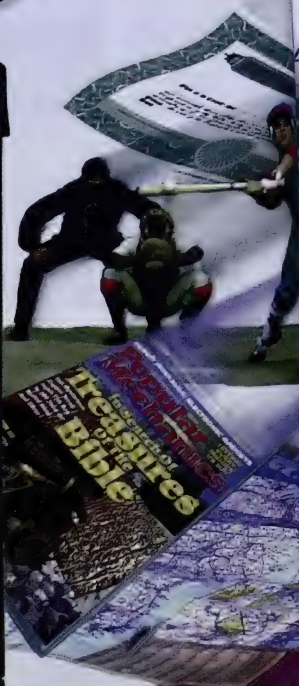
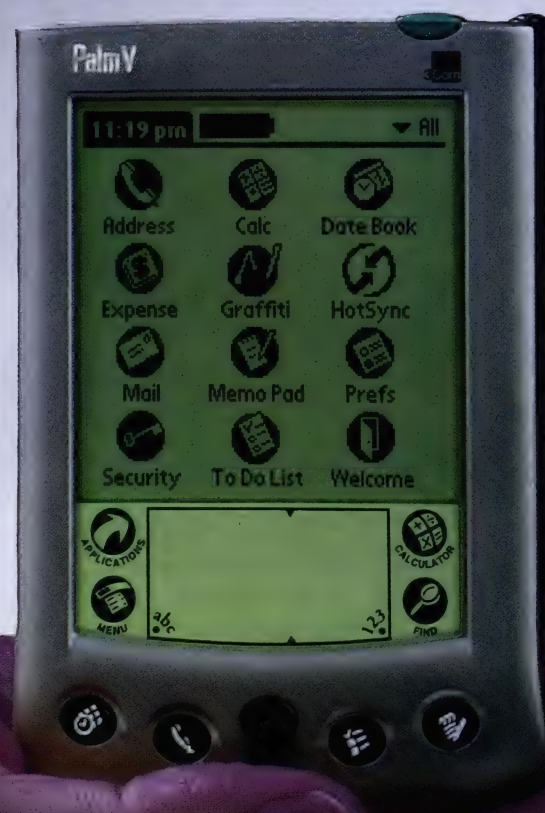
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aches and pains.

IN THE PALM OF YOUR HAND

Be connected to the Internet from anywhere with new wireless personal digital assistants.



BY REBECCA DAY
Photo by Barry Blackman

As power tools for road

warriors, personal digital assistants (PDAs) have gone as far as they can go with addresses, to-do lists and calendars. Next stop: cyberspace. Later this year, market leader Palm Computing hopes to deliver a smooth wireless path to the Internet, a goal that's eluded several PDA manufacturers who have come up with unwieldy cellphone-to-PDA and PC card modem systems in the

ELECTRONICS

past. New Windows CE-based Palm-size PCs are taking the wired road to the Internet for now, offering support for audio players, video viewers and Web-browsing services that strip down content for a PDA.

Not only are personal digital assistants making better use of the Internet, they're also taking on new looks and configurations as Palm wannabes try to reshape the popular Pilot concept in their own image. Dictaphone wants a piece of the handheld action and has built a PDA into a portable voice recorder. Qualcomm is spinning off a new hybrid category that squeezes a PalmPilot and a wireless phone into the same handheld device. Microsoft Palm-size PC supporters have juiced up second-generation products with color displays to support their multimedia push. Even the old PalmPilot is getting a facelift. The new Palm V is

dressed in a streamlined anodized aluminum case that's thinner than the Palm III by nearly half.

Is anyone going to buy these pricey personal companions? It's a fertile market, according to research from International Data, which predicts that 2.6 million of the devices will be shipped this year, shooting up to 5.2 million in 2002. At \$500 and up, some of the new PDAs are testing the limits of user budgets for devices that don't have a keyboard or a smooth means for inputting text. Will new attributes be enough to make costly PDAs indispensable companions? Possibly. Here's what's coming your way.

Palm V

With all the Pilot look-alikes on the market, Palm had to do something to set itself apart. Its response is the \$449 Palm V, a slimmed-down, superstyled version of the Palm III that weighs just 4 ounces, about half as much as other PDAs. Palm V is framed in an anodized aluminum case and comes with a leather cover. Under the hood, the Palm V packs 2MB of RAM, enough to store the addresses of 6000 of your closest friends, five years of appointments, 1500 to-do items, 1500 memos and 200 e-mail messages—plus applications from third-party suppliers. Palm V may look a bit understated when placed next to a next-generation palm-size PC with its splashy color screen, but you can expect days more use

from the Palm V's rechargeable lithium-ion battery.

Qualcomm pdQ

Like any cellphone, the price for the Qualcomm pdQ will be set by the phone retailer, but market watchers peg the tag at between \$500 and \$1000. The lower end of the range wouldn't be a bad deal since the de-



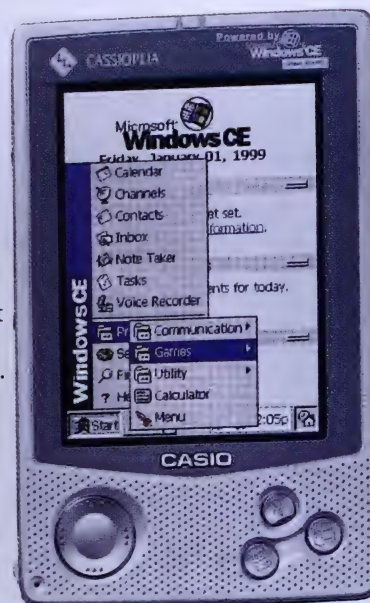
vice does double duty as a reformat- ted PalmPilot III and a digital phone. Combining the two has obvious advantages: You carry one gadget instead of two, and you don't have to

juggle between your PDA and phone to find a phone number and make a call. No one there? Tap on the e-mail address and punch out a short message on the virtual keyboard. You can browse the Web, too, though the sluggish download rate of 13.2Kbps means you'll be burning time and money on your pricey cellular network.

Casio E-100

Response time is crucial in a PDA, and Casio's 131-MHz engine gets you in and out of applications quickly compared to other palm-size PCs, which drive at 100 MHz or less. Three programmable buttons store your favorite apps and an action wheel lets you thumb through files quickly. You can also navigate with the cursor pad. The \$499 E-100 boasts 65,000 colors, compared with 256 on other units.

There are 16MB of RAM and a CompactFlash slot, which will accept a 56K modem in the future. An Audible player isn't built in but support for it comes with the latest version of Windows CE, and you can download one for free from the Casio Web site



CASIO E-100

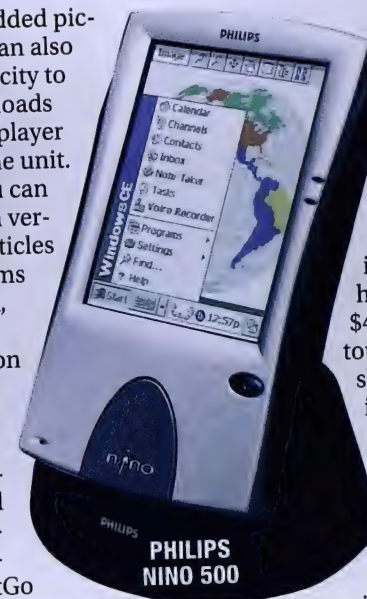
Look for an optional multimedia pack (\$69) bundling an MP3 audio player and an MPEG movie player for playing back brief video clips of movies or TV shows. A 56Kbps CompactFlash modem is available separately for \$199.

Philips Nino 500

Philips likes to show off its speech-recognition talents and it's the only palm-size PC company to include voice command and control software as a basic feature of its product, rather than as an add-on. You can launch an application or open a file by speaking a command such as "calendar" or "e-mail." Nino 500, which lists for \$499, steps up to 16MB and 256 colors from 8MB and a monochrome display in the previous version. Color and memory come in handy for viewing JPEG im-

(along with \$50 worth of Audible recordings). You can also download an AvantGo Web browser from the Casio site for access to information from *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, CNET's NEWS.COM, *InfoWorld* and *The Sporting News*, all in a format tailored to the small screen size.

ages on the embedded picture viewer. You can also use the extra capacity to store audio downloads from the Audible player that's built into the unit. From Audible you can download spoken versions of books, articles and radio programs for later playback, using either the headphone jack on the unit or a car cassette adapter. Nino will also play MP3 recordings downloaded from other Internet sites. Also included: an AvantGo Web browser, CompactFlash slot, printer and fax software, and Calligrapher, a handwriting recognition program.



PHILIPS NINO 500

favorite applications.

Aero comes with a built-in Audible player, a picture viewer for JPEG files, a headphone jack and a CompactFlash expansion slot for future third-party applications such as one-way paging, modems and local area network cards. It ships with 16MB of RAM, a docking station, a car adapter for playing Nino content through a car stereo system and a palette of software titles that includes a power calculator and a business expense tracker.

Dictaphone

How does a company known for voice recording jump on the e-mail bandwagon? Combine the two and start pushing "voice e-mail." That's Dictaphone's strategy with its \$449 Walkabout Quest and the company has thrown in a synchronizing organizer for good measure. The Walkabout Quest PDA has no modem, though, so it has to be linked to a PC for communications capability. You create a

voice memo by speaking into the Quest's microphone, tapping a recipient name from the address book and hitting Send on the touchscreen. Quest converts the memo into a .WAV file and it scoots through cyberspace as an e-mail attachment. You can download e-mail messages to the device, leave the office and then respond by voice as you read or listen to each message. Each removable 2MB memory card stores 40 minutes of audio.

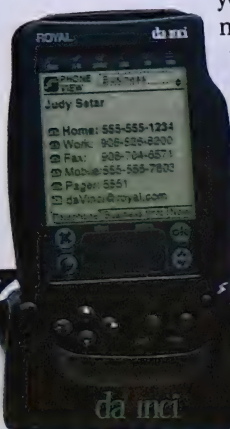


DICTAPHONE WALKABOUT QUEST

Royal daVinci

Take away the wireless connection of the Palm VII, the fancy shell around the Palm V, the color screen and multimedia support on new-generation palm-size PCs, and what have you got? A connected organizer, the product that began the whole PDA trend. Royal believes there's a market for a stripped-down model at the bare-bones price of \$99, which places it \$100 beneath the least expensive PalmPilot. The daVinci gives

you a phone book, notepad, memo pad, to-do list, calendar planner and calculator, and the device synchronizes data with the personal information manager (PIM) software on a PC. A fold-down keyboard costs \$20. **PM**

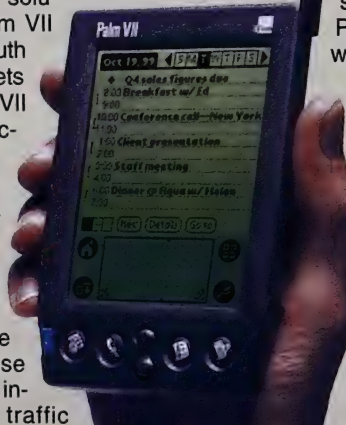


ROYAL DAVINCI

3COM PALM VII

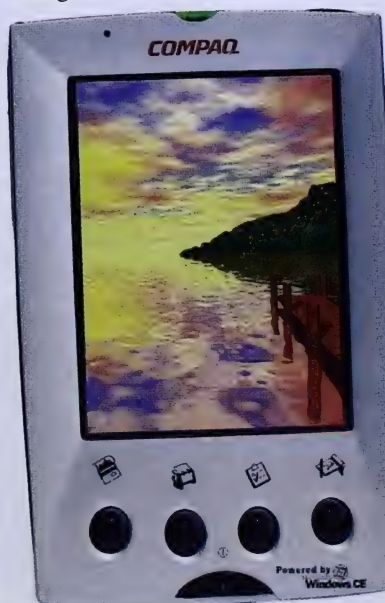
The two-way radio inside the Palm VII cuts the cord to the phone line and the PC. With current palm PCs, you can pull in information from the Web through wired modem add-on solutions or direct PC connections, but Palm VII (\$800) does it wirelessly over the BellSouth data network, which extends to 260 markets nationwide. Currently in field trials, Palm VII is designed to provide fast and easy access to Internet Web sites and company intranet sites, along with e-mail.

To make Internet content work on a PDA, Palm uses "Web clipping" to extract necessary information from a given Web site and weed out extraneous data such as images, which slow down access time and clutter the screen. The system works on a query-and-response format. Enter data for information you're interested in—a stock quote, or local traffic



info—and the compressed information appears in under 10 seconds. Monthly subscriptions for clips and e-mail over the Palm.net network start at \$10 for 250 screens of information—e-mail or data. Palm VII will ship with 22 applications, which are launched by tapping icons on the screen.

Applications include Bank of America home banking, E*Trade quotes and trading, MasterCard and Visa ATM locator service, various news and sports providers, a Merriam-Webster dictionary and thesaurus, UPS package tracker, U.S. West Yellow Pages, Yahoo people search, Etak real-time travel information, Frommer's and Fodor's travel guides, Moviefone, Official Airline Guide, TicketMaster, Travelocity flight information and The Weather Channel.



COMPAQ AERO

Compaq Aero

Use Aero inside or out, thanks to reflective screen technology that makes the LCD as visible under fluorescent indoor lighting as in outdoor light. Go easy on the backlight on the Aero, or any of the color PDAs, because color and backlight-

For More On Technology

Check the Technology channel on the PMZone Web site at <http://popularmechanics.com/popmech/elect/1HOMELECT.html>

Automotive

VIPER VS VETTE

America's sports cars are road racing again.

BY JIM McCRAW

Just when we thought that participation in big-time road racing was kind of a dead issue in Detroit, along comes a seriously renewed interest on the part of not one but two automakers. The

MOTORSPORTS

company formerly known as Chrysler had been supporting its Viper GTS with a real factory-backed purpose-built race program, the GTS-R. Now things will get some added spice this season and next thanks to the arrival of the officially supported Chevrolet Corvette C5-R.

How much are the Vette and Viper road racers alike and how much are they like the Vette or Viper you may see down at the local dealer? Read on.

Corvette C5-R

Chevrolet debuted the new C5-R factory race car at last November's Specialty Equipment Manufacturer's Associa-

tion (SEMA) Show in Las Vegas. The C5-R was designed and built to compete in FIA GT2 sprint and endurance races against the Porsche 911, BMW 3 Series and, of course, the Dodge Viper GTS-R—campaigned by professional factory teams. Still teething, the Corvette C5-R race car is a Pratt & Miller Racing design, built at the firm's shop in Wixom, Mich., near Detroit.

Pratt & Miller started 18 months ago with a completely stock C5 Corvette. They tore it down to its most basic components, and built it back up into a pure race car, slightly longer, lower and wider than a production C5. The stock C5's 104.5-in. wheelbase stretched to 104.7 in. The length was stretched from 179.7 in. to 182.8 in. overall. The C5's stock height of 47.8 in. was lowered to 45.8, and the car's width was stretched from the stock 73.6 in. to 76.4 in.

Canadian Trans-Am racer Ron Fellows is the lead driver, along with veteran road racers Chris Kneifel and John Paul Jr. A second team, from the Riley & Scott race shop in Indianapolis, also runs a C5-R with drivers Scott Sharp, Andy Pilgrim and GM engineer/racer John Heinricy.

The C5-R uses a specially built 6.0-liter small-block V8, with a 4.125-in. bore and a 3.42-in. stroke for a total of 365 cu. in. The stock Corvette's aluminum small-block engine has a 3.90-in. bore and 3.62-in. stroke, with 10.5:1 compression, making 345 hp, while the race engine's output is at least 600 hp at 7200 rpm with 495 ft.-lb. of torque at 5600 rpm.

The racing engine's block has larger water passages than a stock block. The reciprocating assembly is based on a Moldex billet crank, Carillo connecting rods and JE forged racing pistons. The cylinder heads have been altered extensively from stock, with 12.5:1 compression. The valvetrain uses a Competition Cams grind on a Chevrolet camshaft blank. Chevrolet chose Iskenderian lifters, Fox pushrods and Jesel 1.9:1 rocker arms to complete the valvetrain.

A Kinsler racing fuel-injection system, with elaborate cross-ram air horns and a composite airbox between the engine and the hood, breathes through



VETTE C5-R



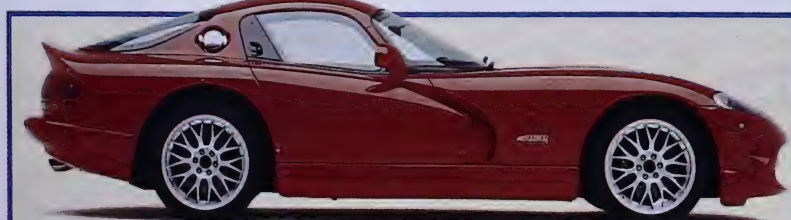
VIPER GTS-R

an air intake behind the headlamps. An aluminum motor plate mounts to the front of the block, with a structural aluminum oil pan and a modified stock aluminum front subframe. The engine uses an external mechanical three-stage oil pump and dry-sump lubrication with the oil tank under the fuel tank.

A five-speed Hewland racing transmission replaces the standard six-speed, mounted ahead of the differential. The balance of the drivetrain includes a 5.5-in. triple-disc Tilton carbon clutch, and a Pratt & Miller 3.11:1 rear end with Metalore axles and CV joints.

The electronics package includes two Delphi Electronics engine computer-and-ignition systems and a complete Pi Research Systems 6 dashboard display, data acquisition and telemetry system that includes motion sensors on the front and rear suspensions.

The C5-R factory race car is based on the stock Corvette's hydro-formed frame rails, stock front and rear aluminum subframes, stock front upper and lower control arms, and stock rear lower control arms. The standard rear



At The Club Level: Dodge Viper ACR

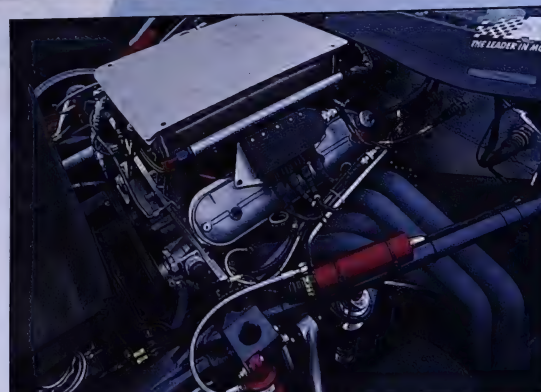
The Dodge Viper ACR (for American Club Racer) is a racing version of the Viper GTS street car that's a \$10,000 option over and above the \$68,900 price of a Viper GTS.

When you start out with 460 hp and 500 ft.-lb. of torque, you don't need much else, so the Viper ACR is not a radical car by any means. Power was increased, weight was trimmed down wherever possible, and handling was further refined for track use on racing tires.

There are several items in the 1999 MoPar parts catalog specifical-

ly for the Viper ACR. Complete engines are available through MoPar Performance, already assembled and blueprinted by the factory, making closer to 500 hp.

Dodge already has a Viper ACR technical assistance hotline in place for help on race setups, and will publish lists of frequently asked questions and answers to help the first group of Viper ACR racers. There will also be a contingency program that will pay cash prizes to those who win the T1 class at SCCA races with a Viper ACR. —J.M.



Corvette C5-R has a small-block V8 that's hand-built by Pratt & Miller. The race motor makes about 1% as much power as stock. The C5-R weighs about 20 percent less than stock. The instrument panel is pure high-tech racer. With a full complement of Pi Research Systems and Delphi Electronics, data acquisition is not an issue.



upper control arms are new, fabricated by Pratt & Miller to clear the Alcon aluminum racing brakes.

Instead of fiberglass, the C5-R's body is carbon-fiber composite. And the C5-R weighs 2510 pounds rather than the stock car's 3245. A new air intake system for engine cooling has a scoop positioned above the deep front spoiler, and the body has lowered sills to house the 4-in. exhaust pipes. The roof has a forward-facing scoop for driver ventilation, and a NACA duct to the rear for the transmission and differential coolers.

There's a three-element adjustable aluminum rear spoiler. The stock 19.1-gal. fuel tank was changed to a 26.4-gal. or 100-liter fuel cell for racing, with dual electric fuel pumps. A one-piece composite front end carries a Davis aluminum radiator and carbon-fiber ducting to exhaust hot air through hood louvers.

Where the stock Corvette has short- and long-arm front suspension with forged aluminum control arms, the race car has the same basic setup with forged upper and cast lower arms with a fabricated steel knuckle, triple-adjustable JRZ coil-over shock units (high- and low-speed jounce plus rebound) and an adjustable stabilizer bar. At the rear there are short and long arms with fabricated-steel upper and cast-aluminum lower arms, a fabricated steel knuckle assembly, three-way adjustable JRZ coil-over shock units and an adjustable rear stabilizer bar.

As for rubber, the race setup requires Goodyear Racing Eagle 25x19x18 front tires and 28x12.5x18 rear tires on BBS forged magnesium center-lock wheels. These are

stopped by Alcon 15x1.38 front rotors and 14x1.26 rear rotors, yielding 635 sq. in. of braking area for the race car versus 421 for the street version, a 51 percent increase.

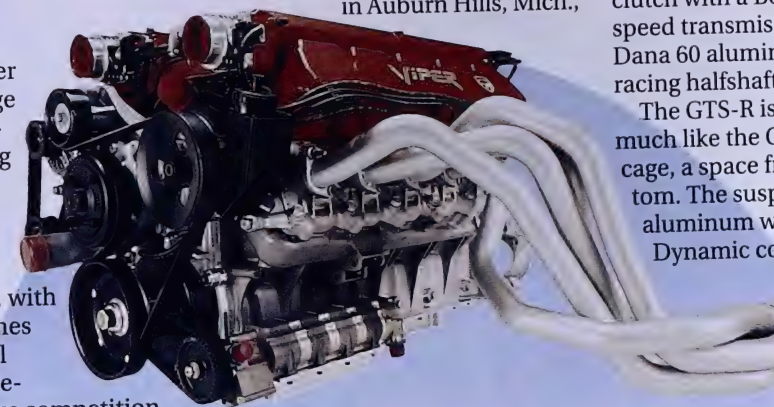
Dodge Viper GTS-R

Back in 1995, Chrysler introduced the Dodge Viper GTS-R, a limited-production racing car intended for FIA GT-class competition. The standard powertrain was a 525-hp 8.0-liter V10, with 650- or 750-hp engines available as optional equipment. It was designed to be a serious competition car for the world's greatest races, the 24 Hours of Daytona, the 12 Hours of Sebring and the 24 Hours of LeMans. The GTS-R was a factory-built race car for professional racing teams. The Viper GTS-R won the prestigious 1997 FIA GT2 championship and the 1998 24 Hours of LeMans in the GT2 Class. It was the first production-based car from an American manufacturer ever to win the French classic. GTS-R competes in international road racing in the same GT2 class as the Corvette C5-R, with a much larger engine and a much larger aerodynamic profile.

The Viper GTS-R came in first and second in class at the 24 Hours of LeMans in 1998 and won its class title two years in a row in the hands of the French ORECA team run by Hugues de Chaunac from his shop in southern France. ORECA drivers include Briton Justin Bell, Americans David Donohue and Tommy Archer, French driver Olivier Beretta, Italian Luca Drudi, Portuguese Pedro Lamy and Austrian Karl Wendlinger.

The GTS-R bodywork is carbon fiber like the Corvette's and the car weighs only 2650 pounds. It sports

a huge standoff rear spoiler, side exhausts, a roof vent and two pairs of extra driving lamps built into the carbon-fiber nosepiece for night racing. The first GTS-Rs were designed and built at Chrysler headquarters in Auburn Hills, Mich.,



Viper GTS-R runs on a competition version of the 8.0-liter V10 putting out as much as 750 hp. The carbon-fiber body is wrapped around a roll cage, space frame and full-race suspension. The GTS-R weighs more than 20 percent less than a stock GTS and can have 1% the horsepower.



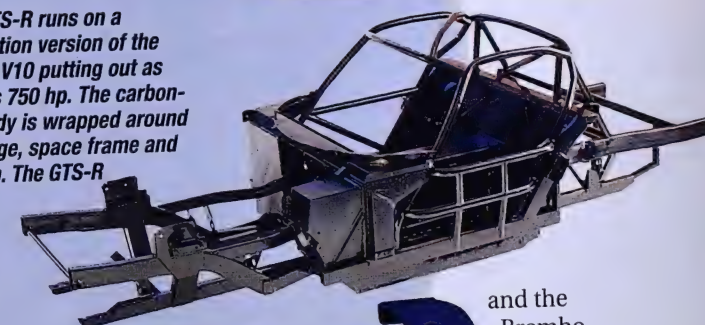
but all 1999 race cars and customer cars will be assembled at the ORECA shop in France from parts sent over from DaimlerChrysler's motorsports engineers.

The 8.0-liter V10 uses a forged crankshaft, Carillo rods and forged 12:1 pistons, all-new valvetrain parts for 7000-rpm running and speed-density electronic fuel injection with a Motec controller, Bosch racing injectors and stainless steel

headers. Lubrication has been changed over from wet-sump to a four-stage Caldwell pump and dry-sump system with a 12-quart remote tank. It drives through a three-disc 7.25-in. Tilton racing clutch with a Borg-Warner six-speed transmission and a 9.75-in. Dana 60 aluminum rear end with racing halfshafts and CV joints.

The GTS-R is equipped very much like the Corvette, with a roll cage, a space frame and a flat bottom. The suspension uses stock aluminum wishbones with Dynamic coil-over shocks, R&S

hubs and modified stock knuckles to mount large bearings



and the Brembo brakes, with a 57mm front stabilizer bar and an adjustable rear bar. The racing fuel cell holds 100

liters or 26.4 gal.,

restricted by class rules.

The GTS-R uses 12x18-in. front and 13x18-in. rear OZ center-lock alloy wheels and Michelin Pilot SX slicks with Brembo six-piston 15-in. carbon/metallic front brakes and four-piston 14-in. carbon/metallic rear brakes.

Eight customer cars will be built for 1999, two using the proven ORECA chassis from last year and six more brand new from the ground up. All eight are spoken for, at an average price of \$325,000 each, ready to race.

PM

For More On Motorsports

Check the Automotive channel on the PMZone Web site at <http://popularmechanics.com/popmech/auto2/1HOMEAUTO.html>

Science

THE MACHINES OF STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE

We lift the hood and pull back the access panels on the most amazing land- and spacecraft George Lucas has ever imagined.

BY JIM WILSON, Illustrations by Richard Chasemore and Hans Jenssen

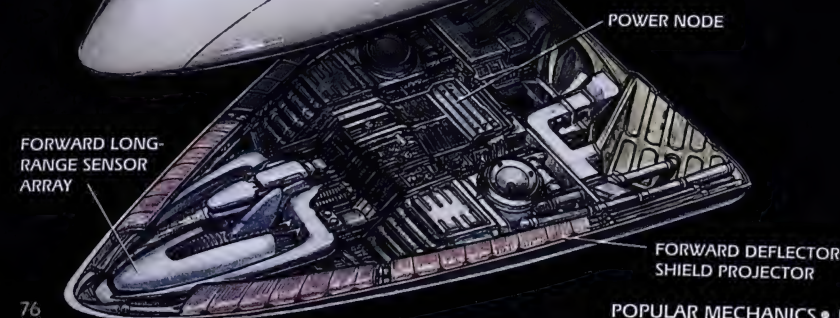
■ Crammed into the subway-tight

elevator, it occurs to us that there isn't a 12-year-old boy on the planet who wouldn't trade his best sneakers to be in our shoes. "Half of the people who work here don't even know this place exists," says our escort as she turns a brass key in a lock on the control panel. "They don't know

COVER STORY

there is a third floor." Even the CIA marks its elevator buttons. But then, they're not hiding a billion dollars' worth of alien technology. "Star Wars" creator George Lucas has invited POPULAR MECHANICS to Skywalker Ranch, just north of San Francisco, and given us unprecedented access to the Lucasfilm design studio. For the next few hours we will be lifting the hoods and kicking the tractor beams of the machines of "Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace."

Like the spacecraft of the "Star Wars" trilogy, the machines of



FORWARD LONG-RANGE SENSOR ARRAY

FORWARD DEFLECTOR SHIELD PROJECTOR

ROYAL QUARTERS

POWER NODE

TECH STATION

OBI-WAN KENOBI

COCKPIT

QUEEN AMIDALA

ROYAL THRONE ROOM

RADIAL SUBLIGHT ENGINE

R2-D2

DROID HOLD

POWER CONVERTERS

POWER CORE

DEFLECTOR SHIELD GENERATOR

ESCAPE POD

HYPERDRIVE CONDUITS

HYPERDRIVE CORE

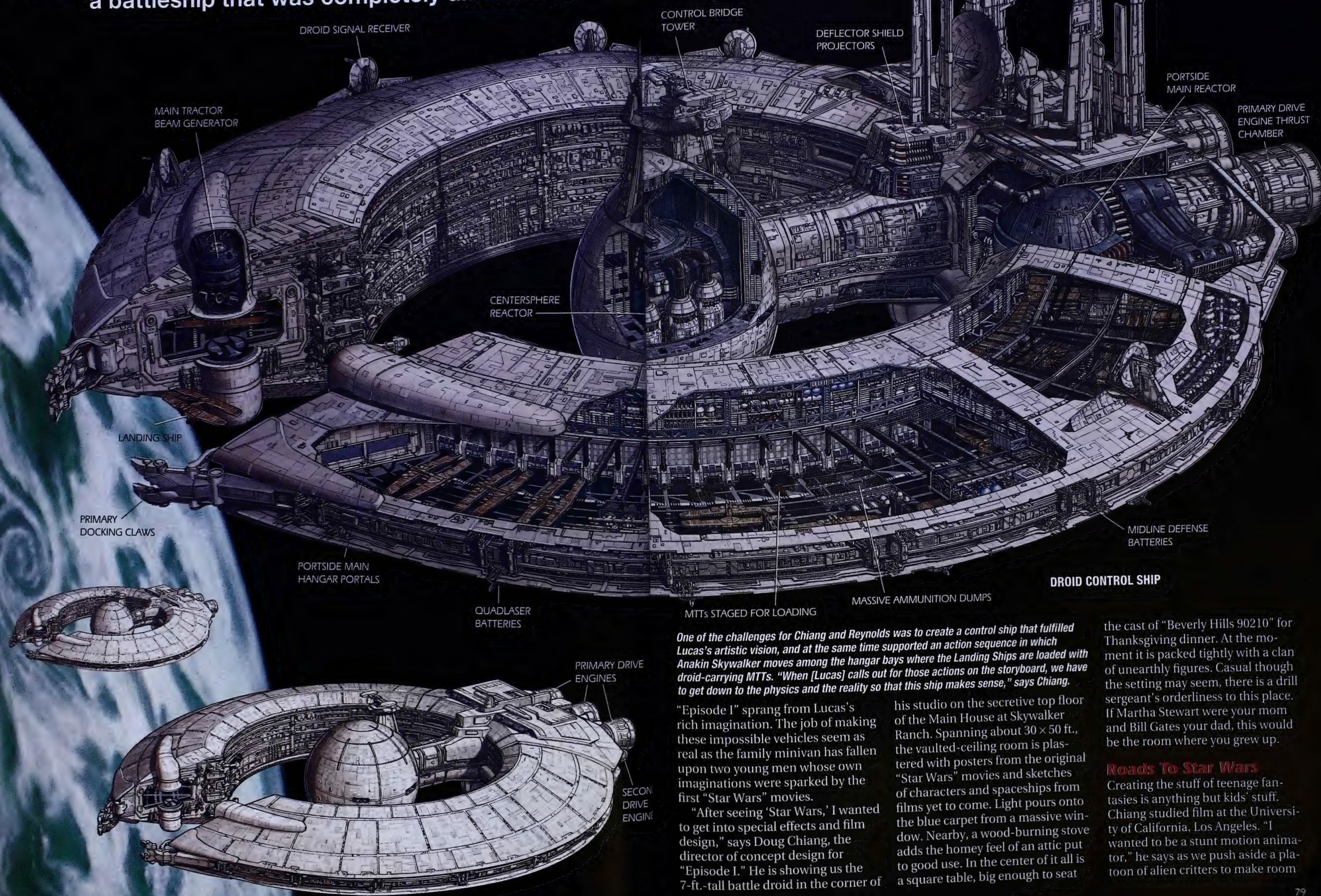
ROYAL STARSHIP

In an age when droids and automated factories do most of the work, the Royal Starship that carries the Naboo Queen Amidala on state visits distinguishes itself as the epitome of traditional craftsmanship. Even the purely decorative mirror chromium finish is hand-polished. The obsession with detail carries over to the hyperdrive core, which in addition to being a work of precision art, has been tweaked to be one of the best performing systems in the universe.

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"As George was writing the story he realized he wanted a battleship that was completely different."



DROID CONTROL SHIP

One of the challenges for Chiang and Reynolds was to create a control ship that fulfilled Lucas's artistic vision, and at the same time supported an action sequence in which Anakin Skywalker moves among the hangar bays where the Landing Ships are loaded with droid-carrying MTTs. "When [Lucas] calls out for those actions on the storyboard, we have to get down to the physics and the reality so that this ship makes sense," says Chiang.

"Episode I" sprang from Lucas's rich imagination. The job of making these impossible vehicles seem as real as the family minivan has fallen upon two young men whose own imaginations were sparked by the first "Star Wars" movies.

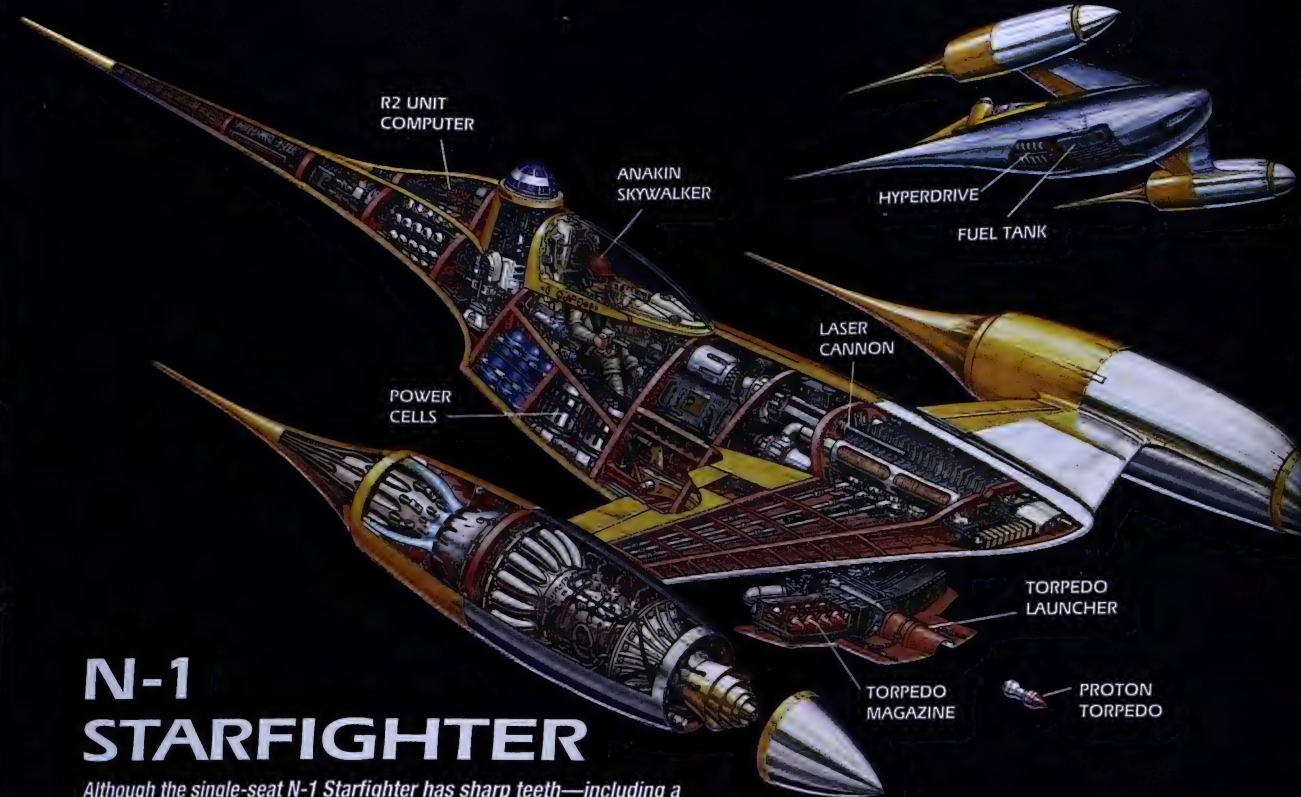
"After seeing 'Star Wars,' I wanted to get into special effects and film design," says Doug Chiang, the director of concept design for "Episode I." He is showing us the 7-ft.-tall battle droid in the corner of

his studio on the secretive top floor of the Main House at Skywalker Ranch. Spanning about 30 x 50 ft., the vaulted-ceiling room is plastered with posters from the original "Star Wars" movies and sketches of characters and spaceships from films yet to come. Light pours onto the blue carpet from a massive window. Nearby, a wood-burning stove adds the homey feel of an attic put to good use. In the center of it all is a square table, big enough to seat

the cast of "Beverly Hills 90210" for Thanksgiving dinner. At the moment it is packed tightly with a clan of unearthly figures. Casual though the setting may seem, there is a drill sergeant's orderliness to this place. If Martha Stewart were your mom and Bill Gates your dad, this would be the room where you grew up.

Roads To Star Wars

Creating the stuff of teenage fantasies is anything but kids' stuff. Chiang studied film at the University of California, Los Angeles. "I wanted to be a stunt motion animator," he says as we push aside a platoon of alien critters to make room



N-1 STARFIGHTER

Although the single-seat N-1 Starfighter has sharp teeth—including a laser cannon and proton torpedoes—its main function is to serve as an honor guard for the Royal Starship, hence its partially chromed finish.

for my notepad. Animators speak in the language of line and color. So Chiang, a talented artist, honed his drawing skills. "It was easier for me to get a job in film through my art." Persistence also paid off.

He started his career as a key animator on the "Pee-wee's Playhouse" television series. By the time he was 37, Chiang had collected Academy Awards for "Death Becomes Her" and "Forrest Gump."

On "Episode I," Chiang worked closely with Lucas to develop almost everything you see except the actors. Sketches and models built in his attic studio were shipped to a second art studio in Leavesden, England, where they were turned into the sets that appear in the film.

Joining us is David West Reynolds, whose cutaways are fea-

tured on these pages and in a forthcoming book titled "Star Wars: Episode I Incredible Cross-Sections" (Dor-

ling Kindersley, Ltd., www.dkonline.com). Reynolds came to the film by a route that is itself the stuff of movies. By training, the 31-year-old is a vertebrate paleontologist and archeologist. He earned his doctorate at the University of Michigan, where he taught briefly.

"It's a natural step, archeology to working on 'Star Wars,'" he kids. In fact, it was. "I had done some work in North Africa, so I was familiar with Tunisia, where the original 'Star

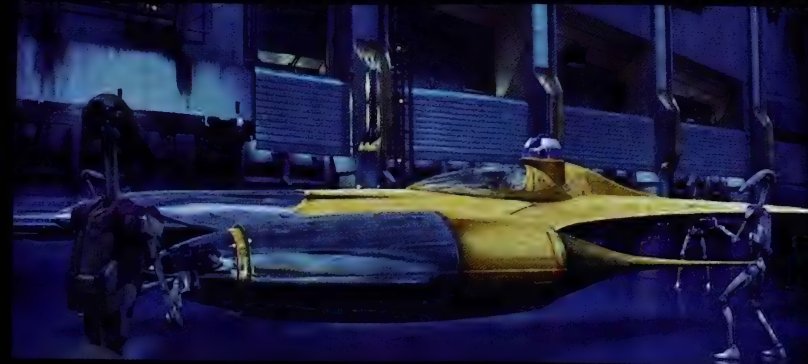
Wars' film was shot and where we later shot 'Episode I.'" He was asked to help relocate the filming site of the original movie. "We went in December 1995 for the first location scout for 'Episode I.' They took me with them as a guide."

He stayed with the project, authoring a series of books for "Star Wars" fans. After Lucas and Chiang decided what the machines of "Star Wars" should look like from the outside, it was largely up to Reynolds to make the interiors realistic enough to convince ticket and book buyers to snap on their reality suspenders.

The Control Ship

While Chiang and Reynolds don't need to observe the laws of physics as rigorously as NASA's rocket scientists, getting all the parts of an imaginary spacecraft to fit together can sometimes be just as challenging. And nowhere was that task as daunting as in the creation of the Droid Control Ship. For sheer size and drama it is the most spectacular craft in "Episode I."

Chiang casually tosses out a fact that is sure to be the tiebreaking answer in a future "Star Wars" trivia



MAUL'S SPEEDER
Darth Maul's Speeder is so fast and agile it can outrun any enemy.

FEDERATION BATTLE TANK
The sight of Battle Tanks never fails to inspire fear in the hearts of the Trade Federation's enemies.

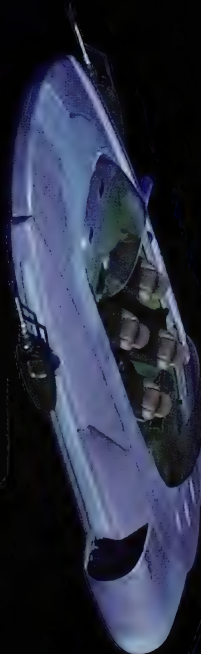


FEDERATION LANDING SHIP
Massive Landing Ships filled with Multi-Troop Transports carry battle droids from the Control Ship to the war zone.



Popular Mechanics

FLASH SPEEDER
Speeders merge the versatility of a sport utility vehicle with the firepower of a jet fighter.



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CONTROL SHIP
controls its
battle droids
from the

THE INFILTRATOR
The evil Darth Maul's Sith Infiltrator packs
user cannons and becomes invisible on his
command.

ANAKIN'S PODRACER

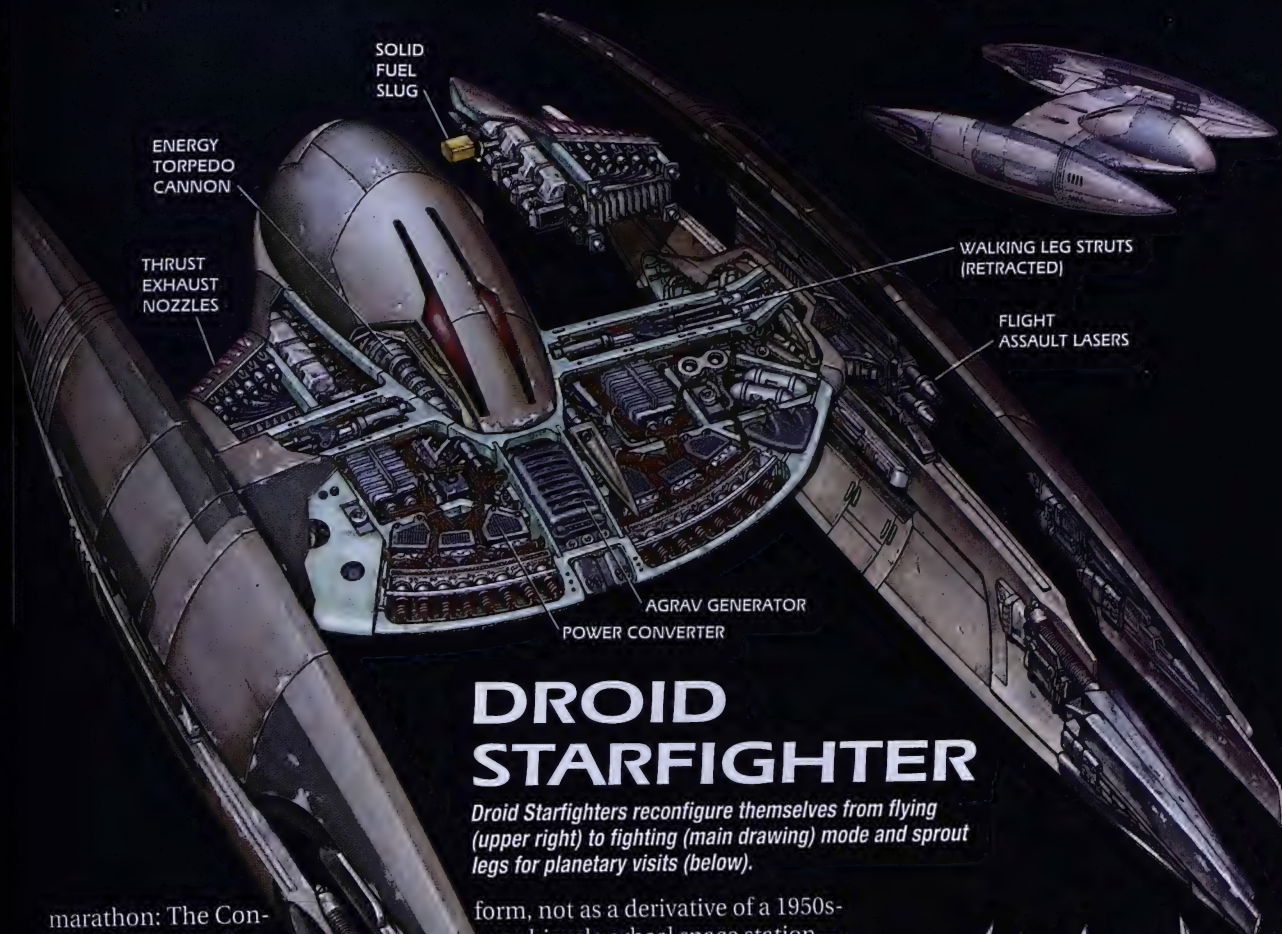
Anakin Skywalker designed
and drove his spectacular
podracer when he was only
9 years old.

GIANT SPEEDER

Missile-launching Gian Speeders leap
to the defense of Queen Amidala.

N-1 STARFIGHTER

The pilots who fly the single-
seat Naboo Starfighters are the
top guns of their day.



DROID STARFIGHTER

Droid Starfighters reconfigure themselves from flying (upper right) to fighting (main drawing) mode and sprout legs for planetary visits (below).

marathon: The Control Ship originally wasn't supposed to be in the film. "The design evolved after the fact," he says. The Trade Federation spacecraft were all going to be a similar shape. "As George [Lucas] was writing the story he realized he wanted a battleship that was completely different. That is why the [Droid] Control Ship evolved."

Chiang began the design process by applying a lesson he had learned from working with Lucas. "George likes simple shapes and simple forms," he says. "He really wanted to bring in a saucer-shaped vehicle." And so the Control Ship took

form, not as a derivative of a 1950s-era bicycle-wheel space station—which it closely resembles—but as a giant flying saucer.

Saucers might fly in 1950s science fiction movies, but 1990s fans demand more action. "As we got into it, we found it was very hard to tell direction, so George decided to put engines on it. I started playing around with making it a more exotic shape. George liked that idea. It slowly evolved where it became this doughnut, with the giant claw in the front to give it some personality."

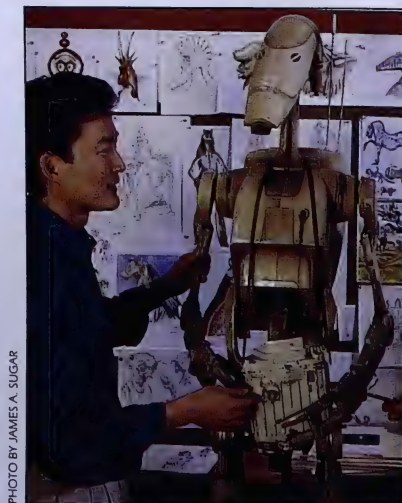
Easy enough for Chiang to say. Now it was up to Reynolds to make it seem realistic enough to convince fans who would sit through the film a dozen times and study his cutaways with a magnifying glass. The first problem was that the location of the various hangars

Chiang (left) developed the concepts for the machines. Reynolds worked under the hood.



in the Control Ship had to flow with the action in the film. "In this case it was very straightforward," says Reynolds. "Doug described how the ship functioned. I wanted to present a cutaway so you could follow the story." Two British illustrators, Hans Jenssen and Richard Chasemore, created the cutaways shown on these pages.

Reynolds needed to fill other spaces aboard the Control Ship



Up close, a fully unfolded battle droid appears more amusing than menacing.

from his own imagination. "I asked [Chiang], 'What are these big bulges for?' And he said, 'They look cool.'" Not a lot of technical direction, but more than enough if you know the story line. The Control Ship, Reynolds explains, is a converted freighter. Reynolds conjectured that to move smaller trading ships safely toward the massive structure the crew would have to use some sort of guidance mechanism, say a tractor beam. And so the bulges that Chiang had added to look "cool" became the housings for an imaginary tractor beam mechanism.

A Yellow Starfighter

The land vehicles in "Episode I" are the end product of the same balancing act that seeks to stretch the viewer's



imagination without straying too far from the bounds of reality. Take the evolution of the Multi-Troop Transport (MTT). The massive craft is used to land droid armies on planet surfaces. Chiang says he selected the bulbous shape of the MTT to evoke the visceral fear inspired by the sight of a charging elephant. The story line called for packing each MTT with enough battle droids to pose a formidable-looking army. The trick was to explain how they could all fit inside. A pencil solved the problem—droid passengers fold up.

"The MTT evokes the visceral fear inspired by a charging elephant."

For More On Science

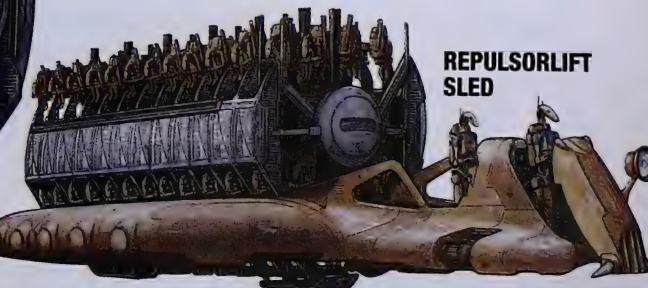
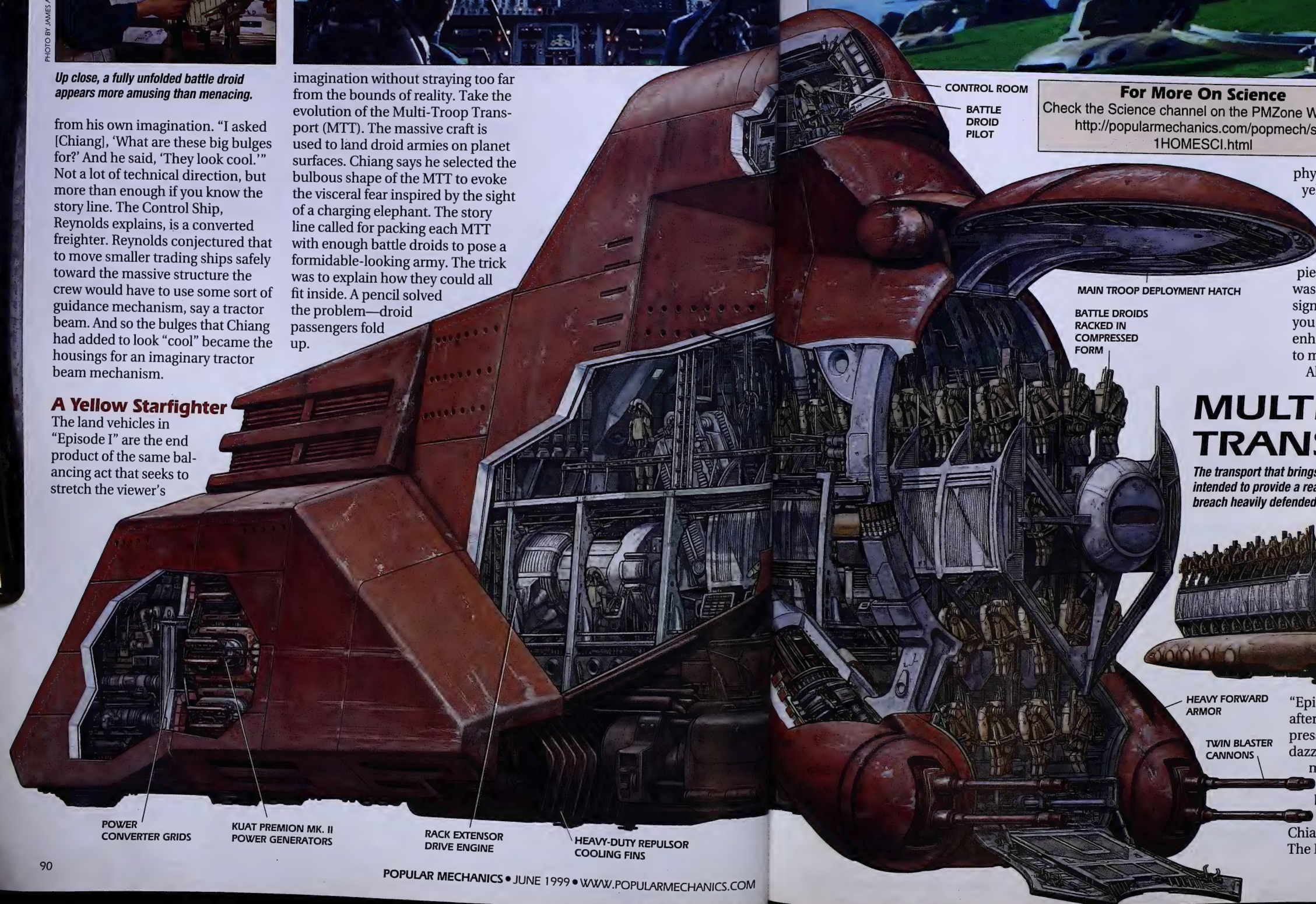
Check the Science channel on the PMZone Web site.
<http://popularmechanics.com/popmech/sci/1HOMESCI.html>

Not all of the design decisions reflected a passion to remain faithful to the story line and the laws of physics. The Naboo Starfighter is yellow, for example, because Lucas wanted a yellow plane. And the Royal Starship looks like a piece of art deco jewelry because a particularly beautiful piece caught Chiang's eye while he was thinking about the ship's design. And so it went with everything you will see in the film: imagination, enhanced with just enough reality to make you a believer.

Although the first screening of

MULTI-TROOP TRANSPORT

The transport that brings battle droids to the front lines is intended to provide a realistic way to cross varied terrain and breach heavily defended fortifications.



"Episode I" is scheduled for well after this issue of PM has gone to press, we suspect the film will be as dazzling a success as the "Star Wars" movies of a generation ago. With a cast that includes the incredible machines we've just seen, we don't need to wish Lucas, Chiang and Reynolds good luck. The Force is with them.

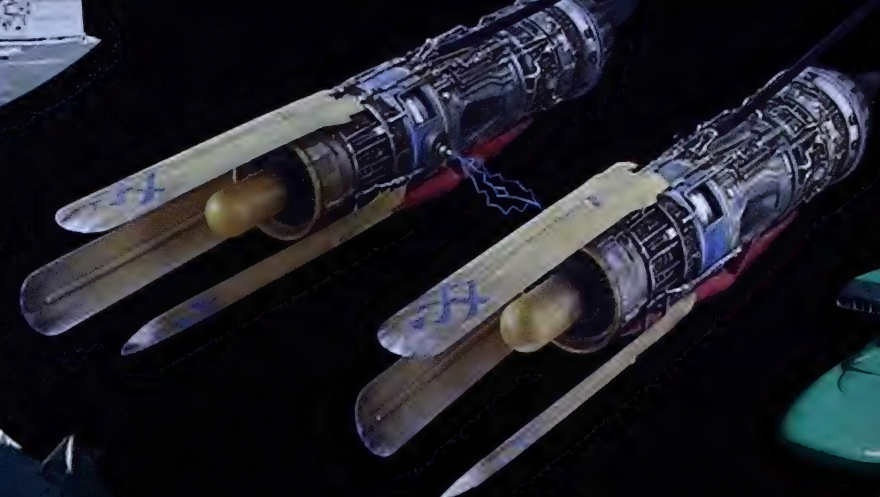
STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE



QUEEN'S STARSHIP
In respect for the queen, the Starship is the only fully visible vessel in the Naboo fleet.



SITH INFILTRATOR
The evil Darth Maul's Sith Infiltrator packs laser cannons and becomes invisible on his command.



GIAN SPEEDER
Missile-launching Gian Speeders were used to the defense of Queen Amidala.



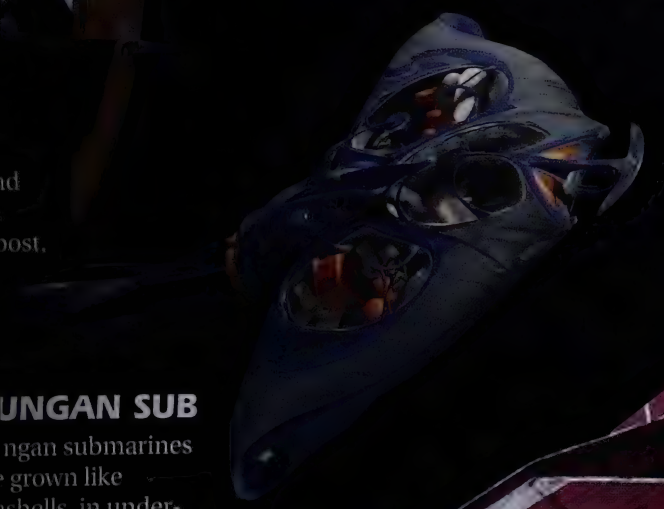
DROID STARFIGHTER
Shape-shifting Droid Starfighters reconfigure themselves for flying, fighting and walking on the surfaces of alien worlds.



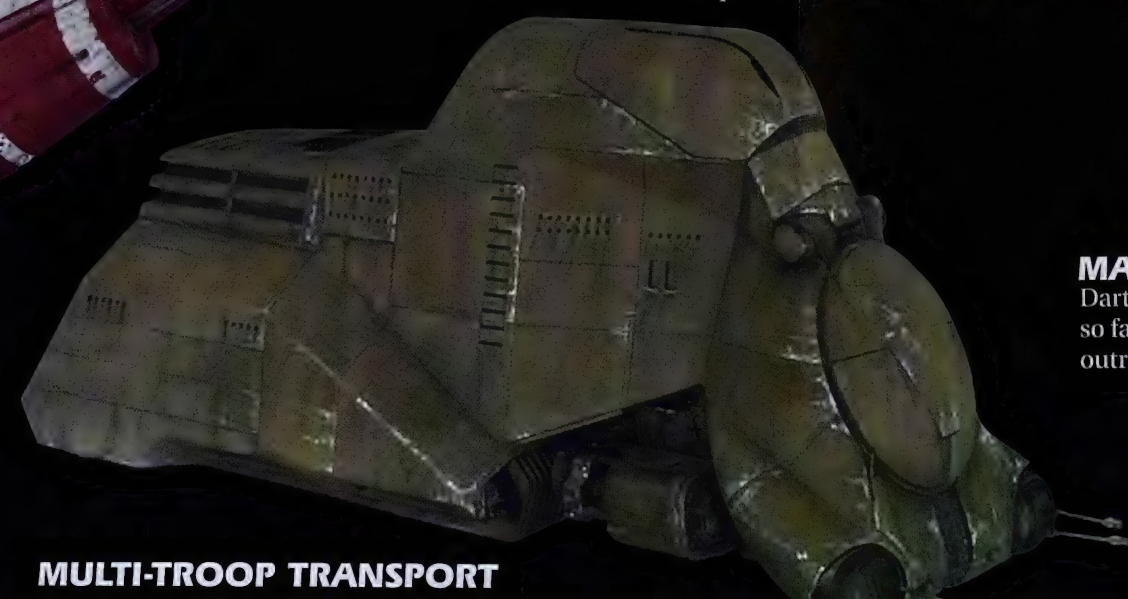
SEBULBA'S PODRACER
A flame emitter hidden in the engine of Sebulba's racer fries his competitors.



FEDERATION LANDING SHIP
Massive Landing Ships filled with Multi-Troop Transports carry battle droids from the Control Ship to the war zone.



WUNGAN SUB
Wungan submarines are grown like mushrooms, in under-city cities.



MULTI-TROOP TRANSPORT
Heavily armored, the MTT carries the bulk of the droid army.



MAUL'S SPEEDER
Darth Maul's Speeder is so fast and agile it can outrun any enemy.



FEDERATION BATTLE TANK
The sight of Battle Tanks never fails to terrify the enemy.



FLASH SPEEDER
Speeders merge the versatility of a sport utility vehicle with the firepower of a jet fighter.

REPUBLIC CRUISER
One look at its cruisers and you can tell that the Old Republic has fallen.

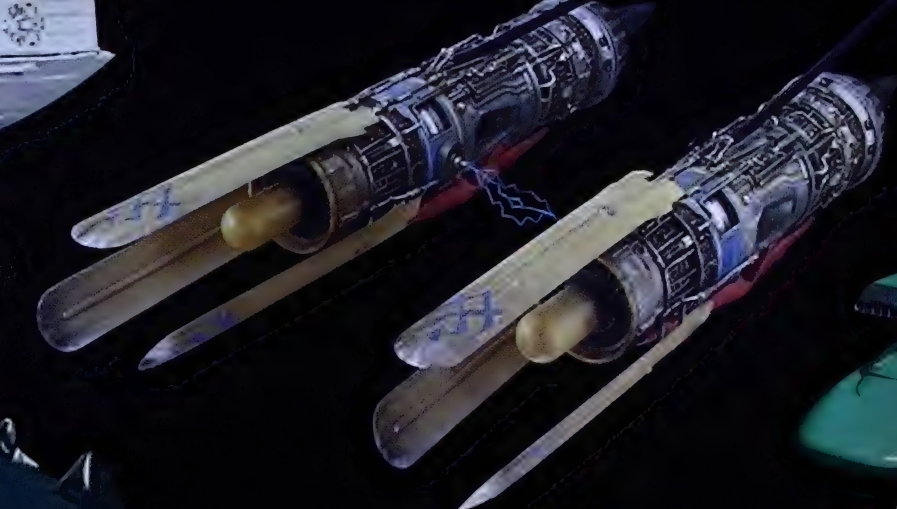
STAR WARS EPISODE I THE PHANTOM MENACE™



NABOO STARSHIP
In respect for the queen, the Starship is the only fully ceremonial vessel in the Naboo fleet.



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DROID STARFIGHTER
Shape-shifting Droid Starfighters reconfigure themselves for flying, fighting and walking on the surfaces of alien worlds.

DROID CONTROL SHIP
The Trade Federation controls its Droid Starfighters and battle droids with signals broadcast from the Control Ship.



SEBULBA'S PODRACER
A flame emitter hidden in the engine of Sebulba's racer fries competitors.



FEDERATION LANDING SHIP
Massive Landing Ships filled with Multi-Troop Transports carry battle droids from the Control Ship to the war zone.



GUNGAN SUB
Gungan submarines are grown like seashells, in underwater cities.



REPUBLIC CRUISER
One look at its cruisers and you can tell that the Republic is a post.



MULTI-TROOP TRANSPORT



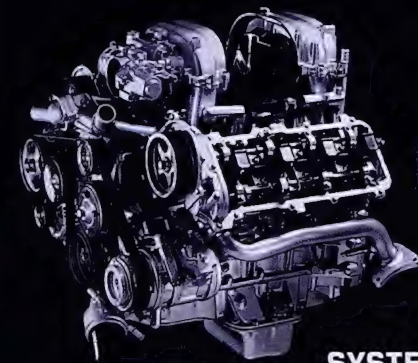
MAUL'S SPEEDER
Darth Maul's Speeder is so fast and agile it can outrun any enemy.



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HAVE WE GONE TOO FAR? OR HAVE OTHERS NOT GONE FAR ENOUGH?



CONNECTING YOUR HOME

Hook up multiple home computers with new networking software.

BY KIM KOMANDO

Have more than two

computers in your home? Want to network them together to share printers, files and Internet access, as well as play games? You're not alone. The Yankee

COMPUTERS

Group, a computer consulting firm based in Boston, Mass., recently completed a survey which reports that 30.5 percent of PC owners are interested in home networking products.

Not too long ago, home networking meant buying a pricey network hub and spending the weekend running special cables from each computer to the hub. Or, you could run a cable directly from one computer to the other in a two-computer scenario. But be honest: Who wants to diddle around running network cables all over

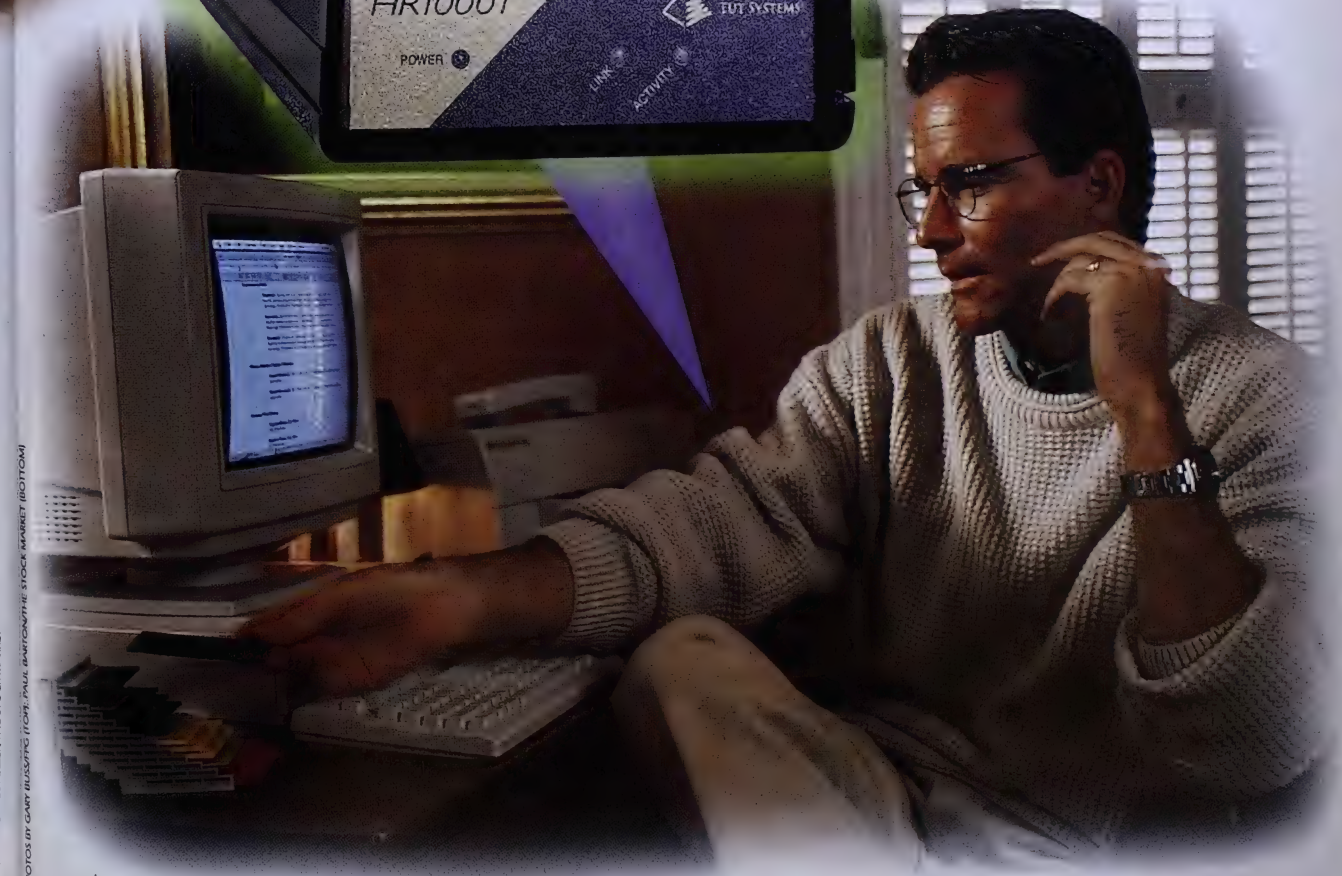
the house? Put your computer toolkit away. Here are some practical new products that eliminate the need for cables altogether, minimizing the pain-in-the-butt factor in setting up a home network.

Handy Dandy Phone Jack

One approach to cableless home networking is to hijack the phone wiring that already exists inside your home. Odds are, where there's a computer in your home, there's also a phone jack. Diamond Multimedia (800-468-5846; www.diamondmm.com), with its HomeFree Phoneline product, is leading this home networking initiative. The idea is simple. For about \$100, you get a starter pack that includes two special network interface cards (NICs—that's right, it's yet another computer acronym). What's special about NICs, at least by



TUT SYSTEMS
HR1000T



appearance, is that instead of traditional network connectors, the connectors on these cards look like regular phone jacks.

In essence, that's just what they are.

In a two-computer configuration, you install a NIC in each computer. Then you run a regular phone cable from each computer to the nearest phone jack. Just like that, you have a network. We had ours up and running in less than half an hour. The network doesn't interfere with your voice communications because it runs at a completely different frequency.

Basic printing functions and file sharing would work with these cards even if you didn't install any additional software. Windows 95/98 can handle that stuff on its own. However, the HomeFree Phoneline package also includes a copy of WinGate, software that allows multiple computers to share a single Internet connection. Trans-

lation: no more negotiations over who gets to be online. Both computers can be surfing the Web or sending and receiving e-mail at the same time.

Swinging For The Bleachers

Suppose you already have NICs installed in your computers or your computers have Ethernet networking built in. Tut Systems (800-684-2014; www.tutsys.com) offers a product similar to Diamond's called HomeRun. The big difference is that Tut offers an external adapter that allows you to connect any device with an Ethernet port to the network via your phone wiring. This is especially useful for all you Macintosh users.

In theory, you could try to get an

NIC designed for Windows to run in a Mac, but we wouldn't recommend it. Given that all current Mac models come with built-in Ethernet ports, the external HomeRun adapter makes more sense. With HomeRun, it's a snap to set up a Mac network using your phone wiring. You don't even need to open the case on your computer. These adapters sell at computer and electronics stores for around \$50.

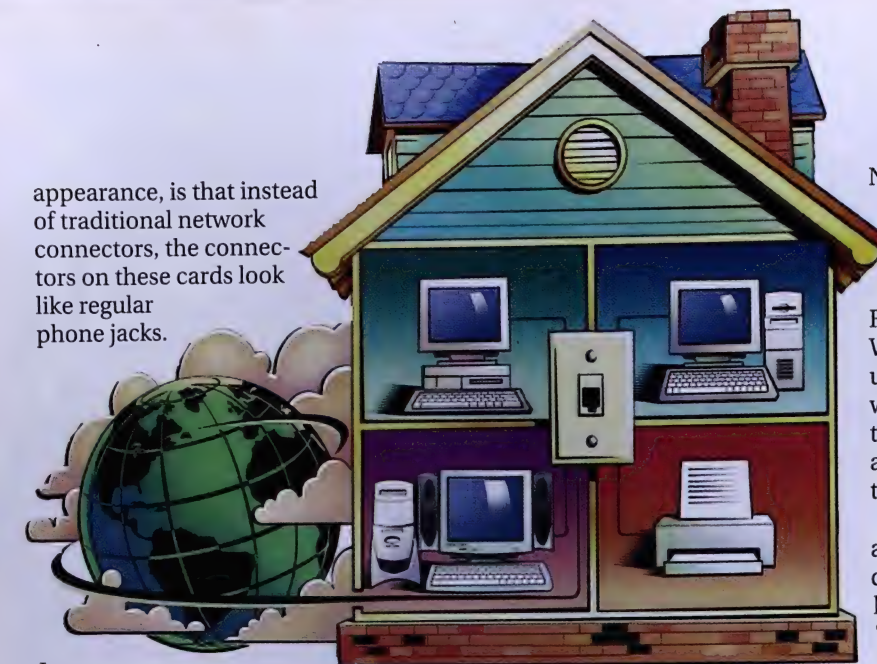
None of these solutions provide as fast a network as regular Ethernet cabling, but that's okay. The phone line solutions from Diamond and Tut both promise speeds of about 1Mbps. While that's only a tenth of the speed of the slowest Ethernet network that might be running at your office, it's still plenty fast for simple printer and file sharing. It's also about 20 times faster than the fastest analog modem, so it shouldn't slow down your Internet access either.

Plug And Share

If you want a boost in network speed, you can shift the network from your phone wiring to your electrical wiring with the PassPort line of products from Intelogis (877-468-3564; www.intelogis.com). These are similar to the phone line products: You connect each computer to a device that then plugs into a standard wall outlet. This system claims speeds of up to 1.6Mbps, roughly 50 percent faster than the phone line products.

One aspect of PassPort that can be seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage is that it connects to your computer through its printer port. The advantage is that you do not need to worry about installing any NICs. However, you will run into a problem (as we did) if you already have two devices, such as a scanner and a printer, attached to the printer port.

As a Band-Aid, you can attach your printer directly to one of the PassPort adapters instead of your computer. However, since printer-port scanners and the PassPort adapter both work as pass-through devices (meaning you can connect the device to your printer port and your printer to the device), we have



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"The connectors on these phone cards look like regular phone jacks."

our doubts about how well the two would behave attached to the same printer port. In the end, you could end up having to install a second printer port. Of course, if you only have a printer attached to your

less networking product like Proxim's Symphony (800-229-1630; www.proxim.com). Symphony provides good speed (1.6Mbps), plus the benefit of not having to worry about a single cable.

Proxim offers a wireless NIC for your PC, a wireless PC NIC for your laptop and a wireless modem that anyone on the network can access. (A wireless modem isn't physically connected to the computer, but the modem still needs to be plugged into a standard phone jack.)

The downside is the cost—wireless networking is considerably more expensive. Proxim's Symphony modem sells for about \$300, the regular NIC sells for about \$150 and the PC NIC sells for about \$200.

line Networking bundles. These packages include two computers that come pre-equipped with Diamond Multimedia's home networking package. Depending on which two computers you get in your bundle, list prices range from \$2500 to \$3900 for the whole shebang.

And more choices are on the way. Intel is the latest big name in the computer industry to announce its entry into home networking: The product uses the networking software built into Windows 95/98. And look for competing products from 3Com, Cisco Systems and Microsoft designed to connect household PCs and other digital devices in the near future. It's difficult to say who will win the networking war, but one thing is certain: If the thought of network hubs and complicated wiring has scared you away from connecting your home computers, you've got nothing left to fear.

PM



printer port now, this is all moot.

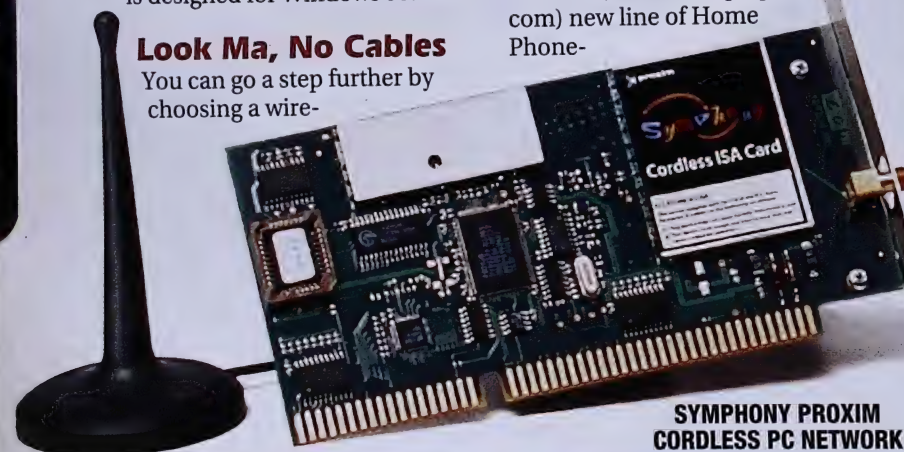
You can find the PassPort starter package for about \$200 in stores. It includes two PC connectors and one printer connector. Additional PC connectors sell for about \$90, and additional printer connectors run about \$70. The PassPort system is designed for Windows 95/98.

Look Ma, No Cables

You can go a step further by choosing a wire-

Jumping On The Bandwagon

Is this all there is for home networking? Far from it. If you're in the market for a few new computers, take a look at Compaq's (800-888-5925; www.compaq.com) new line of Home Phone-



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For More On Technology

Check the Technology channel on the PMZone Web site at <http://popularmechanics.com/popmech/elect/1HOMELECT.html>



WE CHALLENGE NOT ONLY WHAT YOU KNOW, BUT WHO YOU ARE.

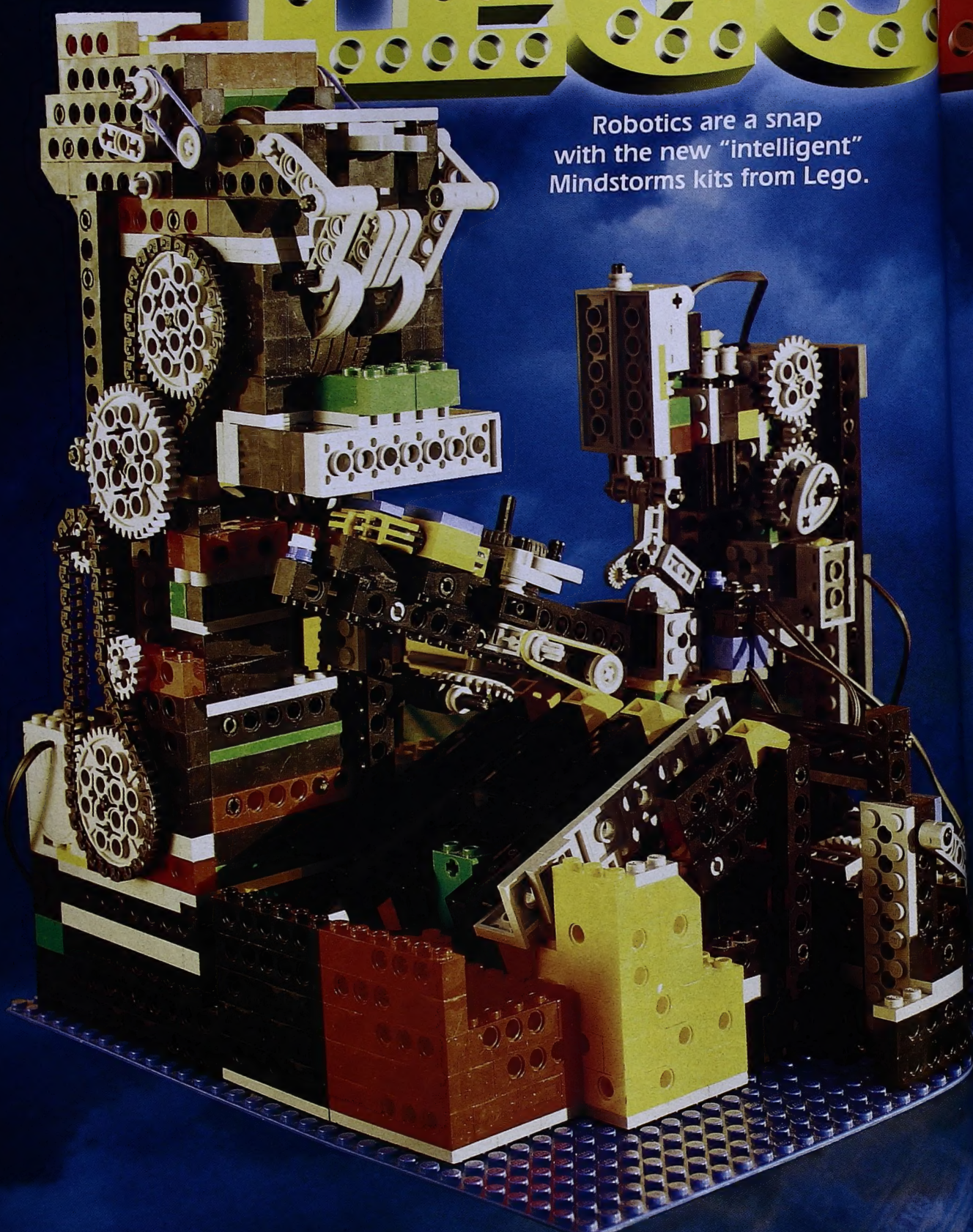
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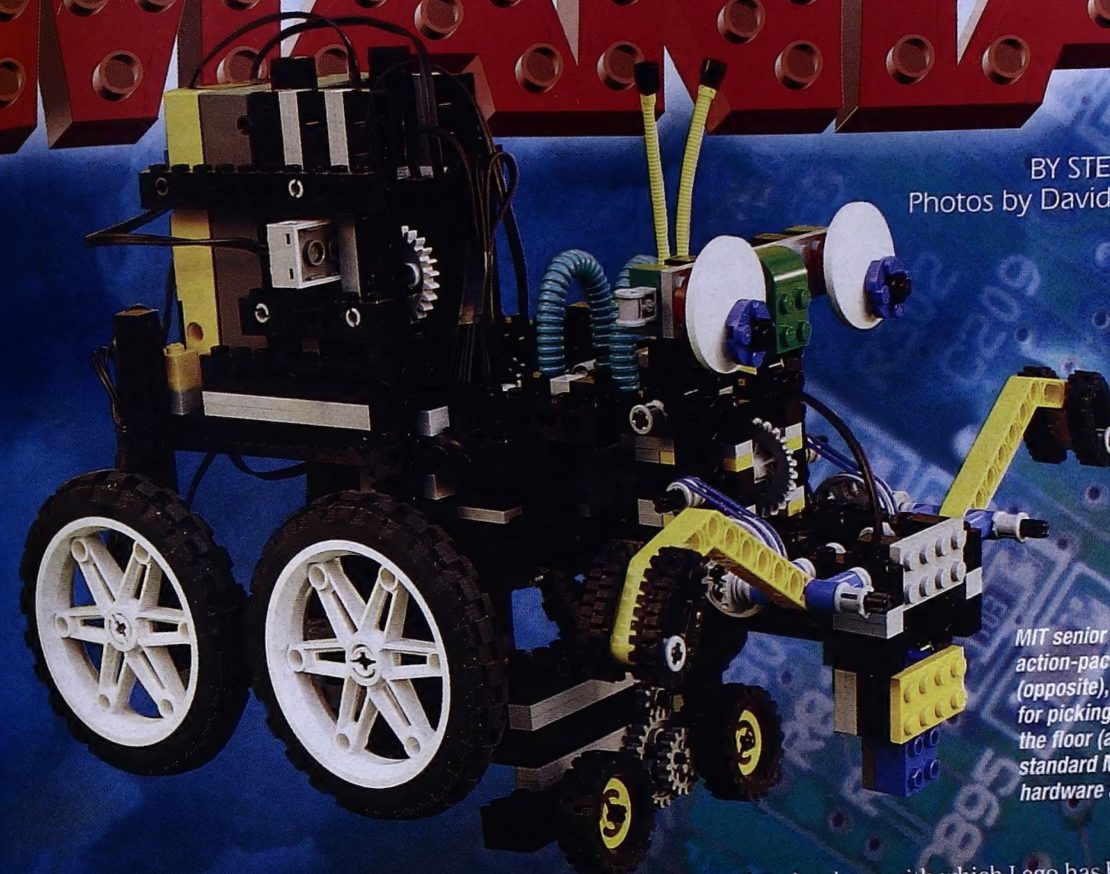
LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN.

LEGO MANIA

Robotics are a snap with the new "intelligent" Mindstorms kits from Lego.



BY STEVE DITLEA
Photos by David Dewhurst



MIT senior Anthony Fudd's action-packed coin sorter (opposite), and his robot for picking Lego bricks off the floor (above), use standard Mindstorms hardware and software.

With so many video games

and microprocessor-stuffed toys to choose from these days, it may be hard for children to focus their attention on those old-fashioned red and yellow and blue plastic model bricks that have been underfoot in American homes since 1961. We're talking about Lego kits, of course, and now the Danish company that makes them is striking back by going high tech.

In short order, Lego has introduced the first widely available computer-controlled robot kit, become a prime supplier of "Star Wars Episode I" paraphernalia, and just opened its first U.S. theme park, Legoland—where technology rules behind the scenes (see "Love That Legoland," page 100).

And, oh yes, Lego is not just for kids anymore. The child-oriented firm found this out last fall when half the initial sales in the United States of its Mindstorms Robotics Invention System (intended for ages 12 and up) were to adults for their own use. That shouldn't be surprising since the \$200 kit (PC required) offers a unique mix of mechanical and computing challenges for the savvy hobbyist.

The origin of Mindstorms (www.legomindstorms.com) goes back to research at the Massachusetts Insti-

tute of Technology, with which Lego has been working since 1984 to link computer programming to its building pieces. In fact, the newest Lego line takes its name from *Mindstorms*, a pioneering book on computers and children's education by MIT professor Seymour Papert.

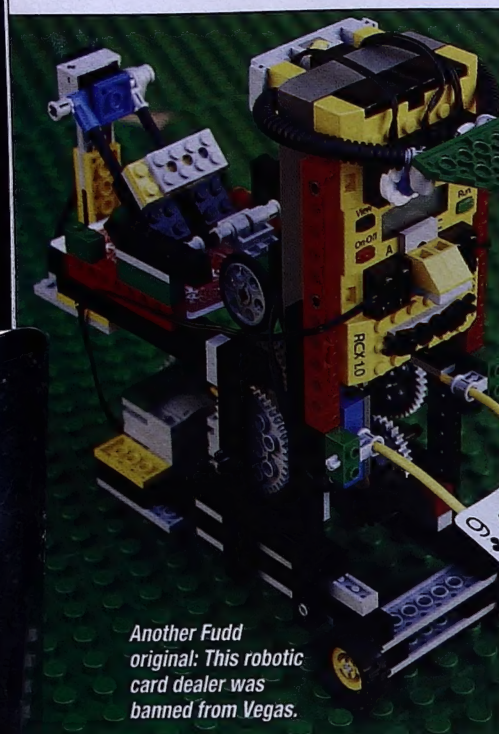
In 1994, MIT Media Laboratory research scientist Fred Martin created the Programmable Brick, a miniature computer for children to build into their Lego models. While the Mindstorms system's hardware and software have been completely redesigned by Lego engineers, Martin is considered the godfather of these robotics kits. "Lego Mindstorms is the first product that allows anyone to design and build a robot inspired by their own imagination," says Martin. "The adults who are buying Mindstorms wanted to do this when they were kids, but no such product existed. So now they're just fulfilling childhood fantasies."

At the heart of the Mindstorms system is a yellow-and-gray plastic brick about the size of a bar of soap, called the RCX. When powered by six AA batteries, its Hitachi H8 processor can receive inputs from up to three sensors. The Robotics Invention System includes touch and light sensors, and temperature and rotation sensors are also available. The unit then processes these inputs according to program instructions, resulting in output to up to three motors. Though the RCX comes

"I have my own 30-year-old Lego set that I won't let my son mix in with his pieces."

For More On Technology

Check the Technology channel on the PMZone Web site at <http://popularmechanics.com/popmech/elect/1HOMELECT.html>



Another Fudd original: This robotic card dealer was banned from Vegas.

bles stacks of Lego bricks, then downloading them to the RCX via wireless infrared signals. Choose the right commands and you can create a robot that turns around when it bumps into obstacles or is drawn to light like a moth.

After programming the RCX for your robot's intended actions, you must still use Lego beams and gears to build the model that will embody this behavior. The pieces are mostly the gray and black architectural and mechanical ones from the Lego Technics line for 7- to 16-year-olds (of the more than 700 pieces in

the Mindstorms Robotics Invention System only a handful resemble the traditional colorful bricks in the Lego System for 3- to 13-year-olds).

In expert hands, Mindstorms can produce mind-boggling results.

Among today's top Lego designers is a senior in MIT's architecture department, Anthony Fudd, 27, who works as a consultant to Lego. His latest masterpiece (created at the request of POPULAR MECHANICS creative director Bryan Canniff, whose 4-year-old son is always leaving Lego pieces out on the floor) is a wheeled robot that crisscrosses a room scanning for Lego bricks. When it finds one of a specified color, the automaton picks it up with a pair of pincers and returns it to a pile in one corner of the room.

Other Fudd originals: an electromechanical coin sorter (identifying coins' width by tenth-of-a-second differences in input from touch sensors) and a working copying machine (which lowers a pen to paper whenever it detects a dark area on an original document). The pieces and software he uses are Lego standard issue, so anyone can duplicate his models.

Some technically minded enthu-

Popular Mechanics



Love That Legoland

Oh, the Legos! They're everywhere at this new theme park located in Southern California. With other amusement parks in the area such as Disneyland and SeaWorld, Legoland is unique in its own right. And although both Denmark and England have already opened parks with the same name and concept, Lego spokesperson John Dion believes the park in Carlsbad, Calif., has a completely different energy to it.

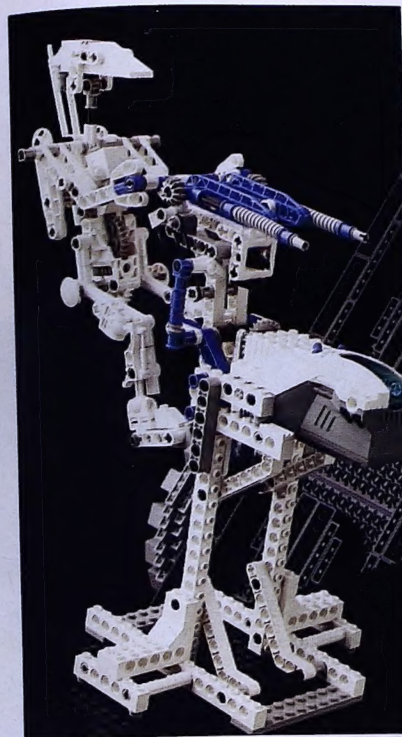
According to Lego, 30 million Lego bricks were used to build the 128-acre park—20 million of which were used for Miniland, where you'll find several Lego cities, including New York, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans. Other

Lego attractions include a voluptuous movie star in a low-cut Lego dress stopping traffic (a little bit of the European flavor is apparent).

Most importantly, Legoland is completely interactive, with tons of things to do for the little ones as well as the grown-ups. Other areas include the Maniac Zone, Fun Town, Duplo Village and Castle Hill—and even a Mindstorms pavilion, where you can build your own robotic creations and let them roam.

Other interactive attractions include a driving school and skipper school for children. So go and play for the day—it's definitely an experience.

—Tobey Grumet



The Droid Developer Kit's battle droid from "Star Wars—Episode I" (above). At Legoland (right), Albert Einstein and Mindstorms' paper copier and PC built from Lego bricks.



siasts aren't satisfied with using Mindstorms' simple but limited visual programming language.

"Lego gave us an extensible system. It's possible to substitute the default software the RCX loads with your own," says Russell Nelson, keeper of the Lego Mindstorms Internals page on the Web (www.crynwr.com/lego-robotics) that lists noteworthy Mindstorms models and hacks. In a matter of months, skilled hackers have uncovered the RCX's internal codes, created their own operating systems and a programming language similar to C (today's professional programming environment of choice), and even made it possible to use the so-far-PC-only Mindstorms system with a Macintosh (www.enteract.com/~dbaum/lego/macmind/index.html) or a Hewlett-Packard palm-size com-



Lego's RCX computer packs intelligence and memory equivalent to an early Apple II computer's in a package the size of a soap bar.

puter (maginet.net/~twdow/mindstorms.html).

At 40, Nelson considers himself typical of adult Mindstorms fans. "I have my own 30-year-old Lego set that I won't let my son mix in with his pieces," says this Lego lifer whose interest was renewed by his child. Between his own boyhood and that of his son, Nelson's construction set gathered dust in a closet, a common occurrence. "There's even a name for it," he adds. "We call it the Dark Ages."

Helping to dispel the Dark Ages are Lego's latest additions to the Mindstorms line. To extend the robotic system's accessibility to 9-year-olds, there's an all-new easy-to-use Scout microcomputer at the heart of the \$150 Robotics Discovery Set (no PC required).

And then there's the new Droid Developer Kit (\$100), with parts and plans for building classic or new "Star Wars" droids that move, chirp and respond to their environment. "There's a natural overlap," he explains. "Lego Mindstorms has attracted the robotics community. If you like robots, you probably like 'Star Wars.'"

May the parts be with you!

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Last Page

Think It's New? Think Again!

BY MARY SEELHORST

PRESENT

All dried up and nowhere to go: You can dry your own food and never leave the house with new home food dehydrators.

Americans

have recently whetted their appetite for dried foods, and made home food dehydrators best sellers on TV shopping networks.

Why do it yourself when you can buy all manner of dried foodstuffs—from the common raisin to the exotic (at least where we live) papaya? If you believe the infomercials, doing it yourself can ensure no preservatives or salt are used, and is less expensive. But a recent



Good Housekeeping test determined that drying foods at home was not less, but more expensive, at least when you have to purchase the food you are drying. The only exception was jerky—even when you buy the meat, it is less expensive to cure it at home.

So unless you grow (or hunt) your own, you might be better advised to just head to the local health food store.

Food Dehydrator

PAST

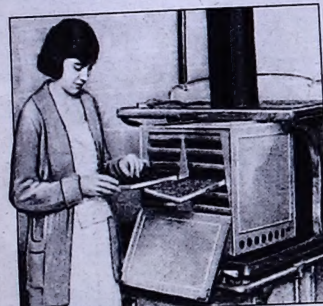
Dry goods: In a grow-your-own era, food dehydrators were practical and efficient.

There weren't many

health food stores in the 1920s, but there were home food dehydrators. Think it's new? Think again! With most Americans still

living on farms or in rural areas, home food preservation was an essential activity. POPULAR MECHANICS often reported on innovations to make farm life easier, and this 1922 food dehydrator was one of them.

FOOD DEHYDRATION AT HOME WITH SIMPLE APPARATUS



The Dehydrator Used on Top of Ordinary Gas Stove: This Type Has Six Shelves, Accommodating 12 Trays of Different Foods to be Preserved

Preservation of foods in the home by dehydration has been made possible by the production of an oven-like arrangement manufactured by a New York company. In operating, a number of trays containing the food to be dehydrated are placed in the apparatus, while underneath these is a pan, or humidifier, having a certain amount of water in it, and which has been previously heated to the proper temperature. From the humidifier, the moist heat rises, passes through and over the different trays, and then out through vents

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